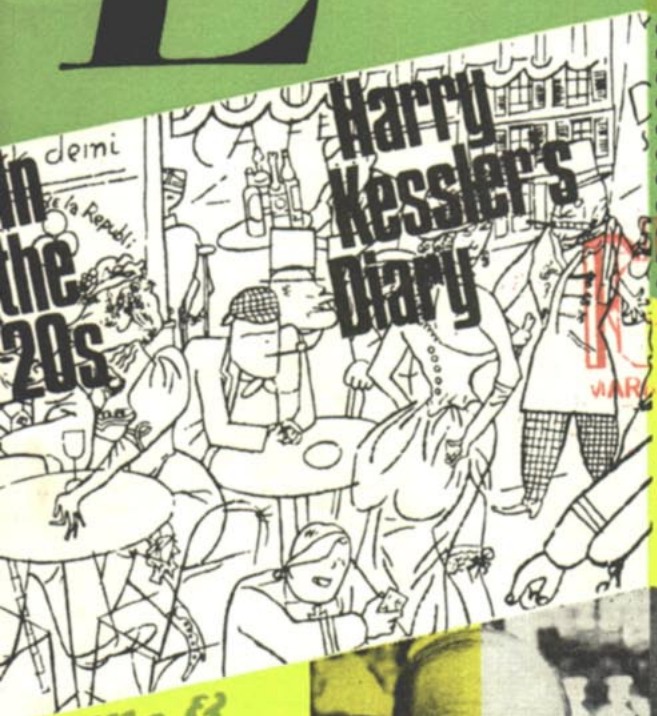
Encounter



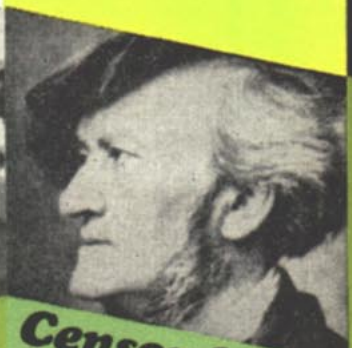
Scrutinising
Richard Mayne

RECEIVED
JUL 13 1967
WARD LIBRARY
N. M. C.

Flann O'Brien

John Wain

Sartre and Violence
Maurice Cranston

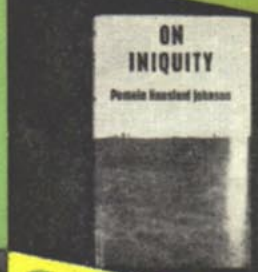


Bastille & Forbidden City
Raymond Aron

The new Bayreuth
Peter Heyworth

The critic as artist
Richard Ellmann

Censorship Follies
J W Lambert
Kenneth Allsop



Freud-Bullitt
Marcus Cunliffe

Chinese Students
Donald Thomas

July 1967 4s

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For the price of an ordinary airline ticket you can fly in a BOAC VC10

You can fly in our extra-ordinary jetliner simply by asking for it and not paying a penny more.
What's extra about it? Well, first there's the Economy Class seat. A settle-in, wriggle about and say "Ah, this is better" seat. Then there's no uncomfortable jet noise. Four Rolls-Royce engines, the most powerful in the airline business, are at the tail end, so they leave it behind. And a couple more extras. We get off the ground sooner, reach cruising height while other jetliners are still on the climb. We land more smoothly too.
That's what's extra about the BOAC VC10. Extras a lot of people wouldn't mind paying extra for. If they had to. But they don't.

BOAC TAKES GOOD CARE OF YOU

BOAC VC10

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Encounter

JULY 1967
VOL. XXIX NO. I

Edited by MELVIN J. LASKY*

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: *John Mander, Anthony Hartley, Goronwy Rees, John Weightman.*
ASSISTANT EDITOR: *Margot Walmsley.* EDITORIAL ASSISTANT: *Bryan Healing.*
ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER: *John Hall.*

Published monthly at 25 Haymarket London SW1. Per copy: UK 4s.: USA & Canada $1: India Rs. 2.35. Back numbers: 5s. ($1). Annual sub.: UK 50s.: USA & Canada $10 (by air $11.50): India Rs. 28: Elsewhere 60s. US & Canadian subscriptions: British Publications Inc. 30 East 60th Street New York, N.Y. 10022. US newsstand distribution by Gordon & Gotch (USA) Inc. 485 Fifth Avenue New York 10017 (MU 7–2645). Authorised as second-class mail, Post Office Department, Ottawa, and for the payment of postage in cash. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y. *© 1967 by Encounter Ltd.*

IN THE 'TWENTIES (I)	3	*Harry Kessler*
SARTRE AND VIOLENCE	18	*Maurice Cranston*
COLUMN	25	*R*
MEN & IDEAS		
THE CRITIC AS ARTIST AS WILDE	29	*Richard Ellmann*
THEATRE		
MINI-HAMLETS IN LIMBO	38	*John Weightman*
FILM		
SCRUTINISING	41	*Richard Mayne*
MUSIC		
OLD KLINGSOR AND NEW BAYREUTH	46	*Peter Heyworth*
POETRY		
A LESSON IN LOVE	24	*Philip Hobsbaum*
THE VICTORY	37	*Alan Brownjohn*
POEM	40	*Lindy Murray*
NOTES & TOPICS		
THE TALK AT THE NEXT TABLE	54	*Edward Lucie-Smith*
EAST WIND, WEST WIND	56	*Donald Thomas*
THE FOLLY OF CENSORSHIP	60	*J. W. Lambert*
INIQUITY?	62	*Kenneth Allsop*
FROM THE BASTILLE TO THE FORBIDDEN CITY	66	*Raymond Aron*
BOOKS & WRITERS		
"TO WRITE FOR MY OWN RACE"	71	*John Wain*
AUTHORS & CRITICS		
WHERE FREUD-BULLITT WENT WRONG	86	*Marcus Cunliffe*
LETTERS	92	
AUTHORS	96	

* *The announcement of* MR. NIGEL DENNIS *as co-Editor, beginning next month, is made elsewhere in this number.*

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Anxiety Makers

Dr Alex Comfort

For hundreds of years doctors have manufactured public anxiety in the cause of morals. Anxious themselves, they have tried to frighten us into being good. With this aim they have depicted sex as disastrous and dangerous, birth control as a health hazard, venereal disease and bastardy as safeguards of virtue. Still more eccentric authorities buckled children into chastity belts, castrated youths to cure 'self-abuse', and advised massive operations for the sin of being constipated.

It is a frightening story of insightless zeal, and Dr Comfort's exposure of it is a painful piece of surgery on his own profession. Meanwhile the bending of health education to fit the benders' moral code still continues, in propaganda about teen-age degeneracy, whispering campaigns against 'the Pill', pressure to stop abortion law reform.

The Anxiety Makers tells a terrible but fascinating story — hard-hitting, documented, readable — a warning, by the author of *Sex and Society*, *Nature and Human Nature* and other controversial books, to patient and doctor against the idea that virtue can be safeguarded by fear and justifies falsehood. First title in a new series: *The Natural History of Society.*

8 pages of half-tones *19 June* *30/-*

Sans Everything

—A Case to Answer

presented by Barbara Robb

This is a book about people who are suffering: they could be your parents, your friends, your relatives; they might even be you in a few years' time.

Sans Everything is an exposure of the frightening conditions endured by elderly patients in some government institutions today. It is full of explosive information which the AEGIS (Aid for the Elderly in Government Institutions) Group feel the rest of Britain will *want* to know about.

Sans Everything contains documentary evidence and case histories given under affidavit by nurses and social workers, plus expert commentaries by eminent doctors, a leading authority on hospital administration, an architect.

Here is a problem which cries to heaven for attention. You can't afford to miss this book. *30 June* *18/-*

Nelson

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Count Harry Kessler

In the Twenties

Diary of a Vanished Age (I)

Berlin, 28 January, 1919

I HEARD at lunch today from Wieland Herzfelde about the proposed first issue of his magazine with illustrations by George Grosz, entitled *Everyman His Own Football*. He plans to distribute the first number through street vendors—soldiers and students in hansom cabs and motor cars, like barkers at a fair. The idea is to be half grotesque, half serious. George Grosz will be the chief contributor and is planning a series called "The Handsome German Male." Herzfelde described their principal object as being "to stamp into the mud everything which until now has been held dear by Germans." In other words to let in a little fresh air and give a jolt to every accepted ideal. He wanted a little guidance in foreign policy matters, since he knew little of the subject. I gave him a rough idea of my views which he seemed to find acceptable. The whole thing is an undertaking *à la* Aristophanes, intended to keep ideas on the move. It is to be the enemy of beer-house intellectualism, of outworn traditions, of the untouchable figure of The Great Man, of sacrosanct stupidity and torpor—including that of the radicals. His manifesto *No, Karl Marx!* is only a beginning. Some of this is childishness but a fresh breeze blows through it.

A FEW *years ago the diaries of Count Harry Kessler were found: 32 leather-bound notebooks, chronicling the career of the half-Irish half-German aristocrat who was known as "the red Count" and was said to be a son of Kaiser Wilhelm I. Once published in Germany, the book became a strangely significant best-seller for it suddenly seemed to provide a link between the present and the "lost 'twenties," the "vanished age." Kessler was an art patron and book-publisher, diplomat and cosmopolitan, nobleman and radical democrat. He was born in 1868 and was brought up tri-lingually in France, Germany and England; his handsome Irish mother was a favourite at the Hohenzollern court at Potsdam. In his Cranach Press at Weimar, Kessler published the work of many of his friends, including Maillol, George Grosz, and Eric Gill, André Gide, von Hofmannsthal, and Paul Valéry. He knew Shaw, Cocteau, and Brecht, Hauptmann, Diaghilev, and Einstein. He disliked the Wilhelminian monarchy and welcomed the Republican revolution; he hated the Nazis. He left Berlin for Paris in 1933, and died four years later in France at the age of seventy. As one historian has written, "Harry Graf Kessler's diary is one of the richest documents we have of the European 'twenties, that fascinating era of cultural renaissance and political tragedy. . . ."*

5 February, 1919

WENT TO SEE George Grosz' huge political painting *Germany—A Winter's Tale*, in which he sneers at the former ruling classes as accomplices of the gluttonous slothful *bourgeoisie*. He wants to become the German Hogarth, consciously representational and didactic: to preach, improve, and reform. He has no interest at all in abstract painting; he conceived this picture as one to be hung in schools. I made the reservation that it might be uneconomical to use art for purposes which could be achieved just as well, if not better, without the artist as propagandist. Yet there are complicated ethical experiences which can only be conveyed and communicated through artistic media. Grosz then expressed the view that all art is in any case unnatural, a sickness. The artist is a man possessed, a man with a mania.

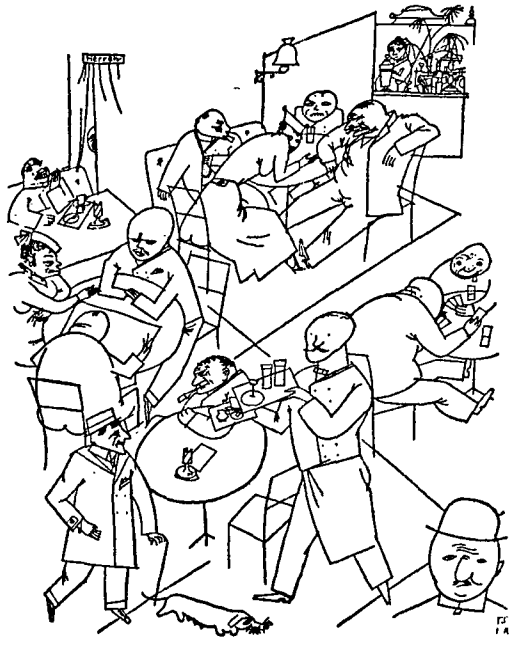
PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The world does not need Art: mankind could manage just as well without it.

Fundamentally Grosz is a Bolshevik of art. He has a loathing of traditional painting, of the pointlessness of everything that has been done. He is seeking something quite new, or more accurately, something which painting once achieved (Hogarth; religious painting) but which was lost in the 19th century. Reactionary and revolutionary: a symbol of the times.

7 February, 1919

WENT TO Grosz' place again. He is doing a caricature against neo-clericalism in Germany for the first number of Herzfelde's magazine. I bought an unfinished picture from him that charmed me by its magnificent colour; the second I have bought from him. It recalls the colour fantasies of Odilon Redon (whose work, Grosz told me, he only knows from reproductions). He came to understand luminosity by the use of water-colour; the work of years. Something of the sort had occurred to him earlier but he had been unable to achieve it.



George Grosz

CAFÉ

20 February, 1919

I WENT TO SEE Walther Rathenau in his mother's mansion opposite the Italian Embassy. Beautifully proportioned staircase and salons in Renaissance and Empire styles. I had not seen him since the Republican revolution. He says he has been having dozens of visits from Americans and Englishmen and they all have the same pity for him for belonging to "such a nation," for never has a nation been viewed with such abhorrence and contempt. Their manner is like that of Gentiles towards prominent Jews whom they accept but pity because of their "awful Jewish relatives." As a Jew he recognises the look and the politely contemptuous hint. He finds it hard, after suffering this attitude all his life as a Jew, to have to suffer it again now as a German. It was clear that he feels a strong leaning towards Bolshevism; he thinks it a splendid system and the future may well belong to it. In a hundred years the world will be Bolshevik. Present-day Russian Bolshevism is like a great play performed in a barn by hopeless amateurs. And if Communism comes to Germany it will be just as bad here. We lack the men who could manage such a complicated system. It needs much more subtle and powerful organisational talents than we can boast of. We haven't the people of stature it needs—perhaps the British or the Americans have them. The Germans can only administer like sergeants, and not on the higher levels that Bolshevism demands. At night he feels himself to be a Communist, but during the day when he sees our workers and bureaucrats he is not one or, at any rate, "not yet." This is the day of the little man—Scheidemann, Naumann, Kuehlmann—each one looking like the others; you could exchange any of them for any other and nobody would notice. In Germany only beer-hall politicians get on; one must be "popular" by sitting about in pubs or one can achieve nothing. But those who can do that have no brains. He knows of only one really able man in Germany—Hugo Stinnes, the industrialist; but he made millions in the war and is interested only in the fortunes of his family firm. The revolution has produced only one man, Noske, who does seem to have some talent.

On all this Rathenau held forth like a lecturer. Often when what he says is true, he puts it wrongly. Altogether a man where things get twisted and go awry: a Communist in a silk damask chair; a patriot without popular feelings; a twelve-tone composer playing on an old lyre. A virtuoso, certainly; but he is always posing as the great man preoccupied with posterity, and the burden of his posthumous memorial is

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

just too heavy for him. Fifteen years ago his mind was richer and subtler. Now his conversation is arrogant and sterile, except for a few shrewd observations. His manner is a mixture of bitterness and vanity, and his curious attitude to women certainly plays a part. There is something of the elderly male virgin about him. Somebody summed up the disproportion in him with the crack, "*Vom Rohstoff zu Christus....*"

13 March, 1919

WENT WITH Däubler, the poet, to see a barrister, Werthauer, to put Wieland Herzfelde's case in his hands. Herzfelde was arrested on March 7th and has been moved from Moabit to the Ploetzensee prison. George Grosz is supposed to have been caught at home by soldiers who came to arrest him, but he showed them someone else's identity card and got away. Since then he is on the run—sleeps one night here and the next somewhere else, as I did in Warsaw.... I can't get out of my head the shooting of the 24 sailors of the *Volksmarine* Division in the Französichestrasse. They went there to get their pay and were shot out of hand in the courtyard: one of the most horrible crimes of civil war I can remember. I tried to sit through Max Reinhardt's production of *As You Like It* this evening, but could not get in the mood for it. These murders and executions which have become daily events in Berlin simply will not leave one in peace.

I heard from Grosz today, and he writes, "Since I find myself at the moment in serious financial embarrassment, could you be kind enough to let me know if I may count on getting an advance on the picture you had reserved for yourself?" It's addressed from his studio, so it seems he has gone home again. I wrote him a note to say I would call between twelve and one o'clock on Sunday and clear the matter up.

16 March, 1919

WENT TO GIVE George Grosz the money for the picture I had bought from him. After he had let me into the hall he asked me to wait for a moment while a friend who had slept the night in his studio got out of the way; I suppose a Communist on the run.

Grosz said that many artists and intellectuals —Einstein, for instance—were fugitives from house to house. He himself feels safe again now. In fact he is getting another number of the magazine *Pleite* ("Bankrupt") ready with even more biting caricatures. Then he described some of the experiences of the last few days which have clearly deeply affected him. Spartacists fighting with an unbelievable enthusiasm and courage against death, fanatical for their ideas. He had attained a quite new conception of the workers from all this: artists and intellectuals must accept second rank to them. The incident that made the deepest impression on him was a lieutenant in the neighbourhood of the Eden Hotel who, when a soldier without a pay-book answered his question in a rude tone, simply shot the man dead. The comrades of the man had wept bitterly, with grief and anger; and Grosz is converted to *Spartacus*. Even violence must be used to achieve an idea; the inertia of bourgeois resistance cannot otherwise be overcome. I disagreed: any idea is debased by an alliance with force.

Bernhard (a journalist on the *Vossische Zeitung*) seems to think that the Assembly of Soldiers' and Workers' Councils in April will get rid of Scheidemann and his friends from the inside of the Party; otherwise the only way will be a *coup d'état* or a third Revolution. That this Government, discredited and bloodstained, can hold its position much longer is impossible, according to him. The trouble is there is no one among the Communists who is in the least like a statesman. Rosa Luxemburg was the only statesman of the Communist Party who could possibly have ruled Germany.

21 March, 1919

WIELAND HERZFELDE rang up early to say he was free. He has been about a week in Moabit and Ploetzensee. His descriptions of the prisons were so frightful that I felt sick with disgust: it is worse than Dostoevsky's *House of the Dead*. The ill-treatment of the prisoners, from spitting

Käthe Kollwitz

MEMORIAL TO KARL LIEBKNECHT (1919)

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in their faces to manslaughter, is so general and the tormenting of them even in the presence of officers so taken for granted, that Wieland's plan for "lessons in lynching" sounds almost reasonable. A picture of a completely dehumanised *Soldateska* that creates in its opponents an equally inhuman blood-lust. Herzfelde said that after all he had seen, it was impossible for him to put a light tone into his new periodical. From now on it was war by any and every means.

4 August, 1919

FIVE YEARS AGO! That evening I was with friends in the Habsburger Hof when somebody came in and told us about Bethmann-Hollweg's speech and the invasion of Belgium. Only five years ago, but a century lies between then and now. A different world. I remember how we avoided going into the street in uniform because of the ovations, which we thought so absurd.

Weimar, 21 August, 1919

AT FIVE O'CLOCK Friedrich Ebert was sworn in as President of Germany. The stage of the theatre was gaily decorated with the new national colours, decorative shrubs and flowers (gladioli and chrysanthemums), and under them one of the theatre carpets (obviously the mossy bank from *Midsummer Night's Dream*). The organ played and everybody crowded in among the shrubs, dressed in their morning-coats, like at a decent little wedding. The house was full except for the right-wing *Deutschnationalen* and the left-wing Independent Socialists, whose benches remained ostentatiously empty. Ebert, trussed up in his morning-coat, short and wide-shouldered, with gold-rimmed spectacles, came on to the stage to organ music, followed by the Chancellor (Bauer) who limps, and the Ministers who were all equally ceremonious in black. Ullstein's *Berliner Illustrirte* thought it suitable to publish today a photograph of Ebert and Noske in bathing suits—the picture seems to hang in the air over the ceremony.

Just as Ebert was to take the oath, the manuscript was missing. Someone had to go and find it. Embarrassing pause. The organ had stopped playing. Finally someone pushed his way through the black coats with the paper in his hand. Ebert spoke the oath in a rather pleasant, clear voice. Everything properly done, but somehow without atmosphere, like a child being confirmed in a good bourgeois family. The Republic ought to avoid ceremonies; it is a form of government that does not lend itself to them: like somebody's nanny trying to dance ballet. In spite of all this there was something touching, even tragic, about the whole thing. This provincial little theatre provides the epilogue to the terrible War and to the Revolution. If one had dwelled on the deeper meaning of it all, one would have been reduced to tears.

Berlin, 10 January, 1920

PEACE was ratified today in Paris. The War is over. A dreadful period is beginning for Europe; it is like the oppressive weather before a thunderstorm, and will end in an explosion even worse than the World War. There are all the signs here of an increasing growth of nationalism.

Basle-Zurich, 15 January, 1920

I CLIMBED the tower of Basle Minster. The German landscape all round me, so deeply German and yet not nationally linked to us. And beyond it, the lost Alsace. Between them the Rhine, the living untamed headstrong soul of Germany. One spiritual land-mass made up of a hundred provinces and principalities—that is why our unity has never been recognised by the outside world. And yet it is so deeply one, like an old oak with numberless branches and limbs. The false ideas of *State* and *Nation* invented by the Romans and the French do not suit this variety. The problem of how we are to maintain ourselves against the outside world is hardly understood, certainly not solved. But the adoption of a false *Staatsidee* is certainly not for us. At the moment the only certain thing is —we survive. Perhaps all the more dangerous and indestructible because we are so incomprehensible and diverse.

Zurich, 21 January, 1920

I WENT TO SEE Busoni with Annette Kolb. He was disagreeably caustic. He wants to go back to Berlin but at every practical suggestion he plays up and makes difficulties as if he were Beethoven.

Brissago, 7 April, 1920

THE FRENCH occupied Frankfurt-am-Main yesterday. They represent themselves, with revolting hypocrisy, as "the defenders of the German workers against Prussian militarism." On the other hand the German government has behaved with incomparable clumsiness in the whole question of the Ruhr, doing everything imaginable to increase suspicion on all sides.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Berlin, 4/9 May, 1920

AT THE LESSING THEATRE *Mrs Warren's Profession*. Very impressed by the big scene in Act II between mother and daughter—really magnificent theatre. *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (Richard Strauss/von Hofmannsthal) in the *Staatsoper*. The loveliest magical opera; just enough symbolism to give the action meaning, and wrapped up as in a sequin dress by the rainbow-hued music.

Weimar, 13 May, 1920

VISITED Frau Foerster-Nietzsche who insists she is a "Nationalist"—that is, a monarchist. And her brother didn't even want to be a German, but a Pole! She has had her head turned by all these Countesses and Excellencies.

Düsseldorf, 20 May, 1920

DROVE to Cologne, to the Cathedral. Despite the British occupation one can get in without controls. Many British troops and cars in the streets, otherwise the picture of the city has not altered. One gets the impression the occupation does not lie very heavily on the town.

10–15 February, 1921

I HAVE been asked to go to Amsterdam with Albert Einstein as representatives of a pacifist group to get in touch with the International Trades Union Congress about the reparations demands from Paris. Among the backers: Eduard Bernstein, Walther Rathenau, *et al*....

Vicky

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Crossed the frontier at Bentheim early today. Einstein, who it seems was travelling in a sleeping-car for the first time, was fascinated by everything. During the journey I asked Einstein whether the astronomical inferences of his theory of relativity could be used equally on the more or less astronomically constructed atom. Einstein said no: the size, the minuteness of the atom came into it here. I said in that case dimension and measure—bigness or smallness—must be an Absolute, perhaps the only Absolute there still is? Einstein agreed that dimension is in fact the last of the Absolutes, the one that cannot be got away from. He expressed surprise that this should come up, for it is the deepest mystery of physics, this inexplicability and absoluteness of dimension. Every iron-atom is precisely the same size as every other iron-atom, no matter where in the universe they are, yet human intelligence is able to imagine atoms of various sizes.

I said, jokingly, then men were cleverer than God; the lack of human intelligence in God is the only thing we can say of Him with certainty. Human beings with their inexhaustible complexity of imagination and intelligence rest in God like a pearl in an oyster. God is so old he needs no intelligence. Einstein said, on the contrary, the further one can force one's way into Nature, the deeper one's *Respekt vor Gott*.

Paris, 11 December, 1921

ARRIVED EARLY in Paris, which I left on 28 July 1914, the Tuesday before the War. Extraordinary that seven terrible years can be rubbed out in the first moment of the impressions of return, just as it always used to be after a short absence from familiar places.

Berlin, 20 March 1922

DINED WITH the Einsteins. Rather too much food in grand style, but a quiet pleasant apartment. The formality of the dinner gave this really sweet, almost childlike couple an air of naïveté. Also present: the rich industrialist Koppel, the bankers Mendelssohn and Warburg, and Dernburg from the old colonial ministry (shabbily dressed as usual). A current of goodness and simplicity saved even such a typical Berlin dinner-party from ordinariness and transfigured it into something almost patriarchal and mythical. I had not seen Einstein and his wife since their long voyage and asked them about their reception in America and England: to which they replied quite simply that it was like a triumph. Einstein showed a certain irony and scepticism towards it all. He really didn't understand why people were so interested in his theories; and his wife told me her husband had often said he seemed to himself like a swindler, a confidence trickster, who could not give people whatever it was they expected of him. He is shortly to go to Paris; then in the autumn he is invited to Tokio and Peking to lecture. He had said to his wife (she told me) that while the whole circus lasted he would at least take advantage of it to see a bit of the Orient.

When the others left, he and his wife asked me to stay on and we sat and chatted in a corner. The conversation came round to his theories when I said I could feel something of their meaning without actually being able to

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grasp them. Einstein smiled at this and said they were really quite easy and he could explain them in a way that I would understand. I must imagine a glass ball that rested on the table before us, in the centre of which was a light. On the surface of the ball: flat rings, *i.e.* two-dimensional rings, which moved about the ball. So far so good. The ball, looked at two-dimensionally, presents an unbounded yet finite surface. Now I must consider the *shadows* thrown by the rings on the table by the light inside the glass ball; these shadows and their extensions in all directions on the surface of the table, present (just as the surface of the ball does) a limitless yet finite concept; *i.e.* the number of shadows or parts of shadows on the theoretically extended table is determined by the number of rings round the glass ball and since this number is finite so are the shadows finite in number. Here we had the concept of a limitless and yet finite *surface*. Now I must imagine, in place of the flat two-dimensional rings, three-dimensional concentric glass balls and repeat the imagining of the shadows. And there it is, the concept of a limitless yet finite *space*: *i.e.* three-dimensional instead of two-dimensional. Einstein added that these concepts were "only a picture" of his theory and not its meaning; its meaning lay in the connection between matter, space, and time, in the proof that none of these exists by itself but is always conditioned by the other two. It was the inextricable connection of matter, space, and time that was new in the theory of relativity. But he still did not understand why it should have aroused people to such excitement. When Copernicus proved that the earth was not the centre of all creation, the uproar his discovery caused was understandable because he really had caused a revolution in man's conception of himself. But what would his, Einstein's, theory alter in humanity's view of itself? Any reasonable view of the world, any philosophy, could live with it. One could remain an idealist, or a materialist, or a pragmatist, or whatever!

6 April, 1922

LUNCHED with Garrison Villard and Robert Dell, American journalists, at the Adlon. Villard, the publisher of *The Nation*, said opinion in America was turning sharply against France, but the devilish war-propaganda against Germany was still influential. He said we had no idea here of the intensity and cleverness of this propaganda, which he repeatedly called "devilish." I have heard this recently from somebody else, too. I asked what would happen if the French occupied the Ruhr and he said the Americans would be angry, but would not act. He explained the war-propaganda by the fact that when Wilson declared war the majority of Americans were against it, and therefore the government had been forced to whip up popular feeling.

20 March, 1922

A LONG CONVERSATION with Walther Rathenau (now German Foreign Minister), during which I told him I proposed to go to Genoa for the forthcoming Economic Conference, but did not wish to go either without his knowledge or against his wishes. He said he would be glad to have me there, but it should remain a private matter between us; I would be valuable because of my many connections with the English, French, and Italians, and he would be glad to be able to make use of me there. Just the same I think he is not particularly glad to have me in Genoa—he may think I am too pacifist, for the military undoubtedly have a strong influence on his thinking.

Genoa, April–May, 1922

WENT OVER TO the opening of the Conference in the Palazzo San Giorgio, impressively cordoned off, with troops and cavalry patrols. Near the Palace, white-gloved and red-cockaded royal guards line the route to the old banker's mansion which is decked out with potted plants and red carpets in courtly style. All the houses about the harbour are beflagged and the windows filled with gaping people. Taken together with the masts and ships' funnels of the port, a suitable setting for the first attempt to work together with the Bolsheviks.

The Conference room is a formal, rather cold Renaissance salon with busts of forgotten worthies in niches like figures on gravestones. The famous men who are still alive are grouped round the green table in a double horseshoe under the chandeliers, blazing in the daylight since the salon is as dark as a crypt. A Cardinal sits right behind Chicherin.

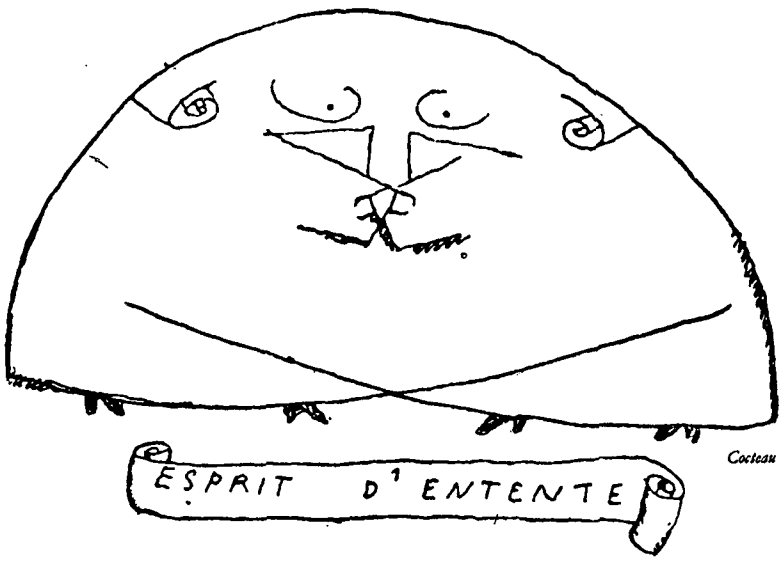
The first speeches are read aloud and at the same time passed round in print—Facta (Italian Prime Minister), Lloyd George, and Wirth (German Chancellor). Wirth's speech is a thin brew on "Reparations." He gets embarrassingly heavy applause; his appearance is the minor but expected sensation.

Up to then the meeting was like some

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scholarly congress. The whole thing livens up when Chicherin (Russian Foreign Minister) gets up to speak. A general rustle of expectation. This is to be the big moment, but it is, at least at first, a let-down. Chicherin reads his speech in French with so bizarre an accent that I thought at first he was speaking Russian. He expressed the Russian willingness to participate in world reconstruction with Capitalist and Communist-systems co-existing side by side and competing with each other. He hoped Genoa was the first of a series of European Conferences leading to universal conferences which would include the rehabilitation of the whole world. And then he announced that the Russians were prepared to disarm if other nations would do so too (here was the *coup de théâtre* predicted to me by d'Abernon last week). The remarks about disarmament were made with a particularly formal emphasis and Chicherin seemed to try to speak with a special clarity. After he had finished in French (without applause, for only a few persons seemed to realise he had ended), he read the English translation, still more unintelligibly. Then he sat down amid slight applause.

No sooner was he seated than Louis Barthou immediately leapt up and in his excited lawyer's voice delivered a polemical protest which might have impressed a French audience but, here, was provocative and embarrassing. He wound himself up rhetorically to a shrill and angry finish in which he rejected the whole question of disarmament at the Conference in his own name, in the name of the French delegation, and in the name of France. A few of the hearers applauded; the majority sat in icy silence. Chicherin replied cleverly, almost maliciously, that he was only quoting Lloyd George in his wish for a series of conferences. It was true that disarmament was not on the previously agreed agenda, but M. Poincaré himself had described that agenda as incomplete and confused. Many themes not mentioned in the original agenda would have to be considered at Genoa (*e.g.*, exchange rates). The Soviets had particularly wanted to bring up the question of their willingness to disarm, for M. Briand had said in Washington that the existence of the Red Army was an obstacle to French disarmament. But of course, the Russians would bow to the majority if the Conference decided against the discussion of disarmament. Everyone was grinning as they listened. Chicherin had wittily finished off Barthou.



It was now Lloyd George's turn and his speech was the high point of the session. Though he had certainly encouraged the Russians to bring up the question of disarmament—as d'Abernon had forecast—he now quietly dropped them after they had performed for him the service of exposing France as "the new Prussia" to the world. He poured oil on the stormy waters with his humour and pleasantries and then emphasised that Genoa would be a complete failure if it did not lead to disarmament. But this aim needed the clearing of the international atmosphere of poisonous distrust and the restoration of economic understanding which were the pur-

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pose of Genoa. He recommended that Chicherin drop the question for the moment; its weight might otherwise sink the ship of the conference. But if this ship could be brought home, there would be other voyages—in which Chicherin would be a passenger—and might even be allowed to steer the ship. Thus, in *form* a dropping of the Russians, which he made particularly noticeable by his ironical tone, Lloyd George's speech was in *fact* an oblique attack on the French. The effect of this piece of statesmanship, expressed as it was in a light conversational tone, was staggering. The whole conference, including journalists and onlookers, applauded wildly for minutes on end. Lloyd George had proved himself once again to be a magician—and had bewitched everybody.

Chicherin rose again to speak. But Facta, the Chairman, asked him not to press the subject. Whereupon Barthou sprang to his feet and insisted on speaking, in spite of Facta's angry, red-faced protests, and went on talking. He wanted to know if the conference was going to keep to the agenda or not, for if not, then the French delegation would have to draw its own conclusions. One could now hear a discreet hissing. Barthou had allowed France to be put in a difficult situation by Chicherin, and this made a palpable impression on the conference.

Barthou's provincial clumsiness, Chicherin's cunning as a propagandist, the superior statesmanship and debating technique of Lloyd George, and the unworldly donnishness of the German delegation (especially Wirth), are the impressions made by this first meeting. It was like a political comedy by Aristophanes—two small-town actors, two great players and one of them (Lloyd George) doubling as the secret producer of the whole affair. This première was alone worth the fare here. But what would have been worth any price, would have been to know what the producer himself was feeling. Throughout the last scene Lloyd George sat with his head in his hands and must have been hugging himself with satisfaction.

THE *Observer* carries an extremely violent attack by J. L. Garvin on Poincaré and French policy with headlines such as M. POINCARÉ AS WRECKER and FRANCE VERSUS EUROPE.

Berlin, 24 June, 1922

AT HALF-PAST ELEVEN I heard that Ossietsky had telephoned the news of Rathenau's murder. I was absolutely dumbfounded. Then I reflected; now the *Reichstag* will have to be dissolved and accounts must be settled with these murderers on the right wing.... (Next day) Mass demonstration in the Lustgarten, more than 200,000 people, a sea of people with red and black-red-gold flags. The bitterness against Rathenau's murderers is deep and genuine, and so is the adherence to the Republic, much deeper than the pre-war "Patriotism" for the monarchy. At four, I went to take my farewell of poor Rathenau. He lay in an open coffin in his Grunewald study where I sat so often with him, his head bent to the right, and a peaceful expression in the deeply lined face, over the shattered lower part of which a fine linen cloth was laid. There were one or two flowers lying on his hands and chest, and I placed red and white roses beside them. Quite alone in the room, a deep silence reigned, and in the dead furrowed wounded face, an immeasurable tragedy. I felt as I had when I stood at Nietzsche's bier. A line has been brutally broken here that now leads into nothingness, and will never become reality. Like most great Jews, Rathenau had something Messianic about him; but not of himself; he was like John the Baptist waiting for the Messiah, or Moses who saw the Promised Land but could not enter it. His death follows this Jewish thread; he leaves behind him no finished political work, but rather a testament that points into the future, a hope that must now be fulfilled by others.

7 July, 1922

SPENT THE AFTERNOON with the painter George Grosz. His whole art is based entirely on a cult of the ugliness of German *Spiessertum*. It is in fact the reverse side of the secret ideal of beauty that he carries hidden within him, almost like something shameful. In his drawings he displays and persecutes the opposite of what he feels within himself. This he protects from the public gaze like something sacred. Instead of honouring his ideal directly he struggles like a dedicated knight against her opponents with a merciless rage. Extraordinary creature!—the idealist turned inside out. Only in his colours does he ever let his secret show through. A nature as delicate as mimosa—a sensibility turned brutal, but creative for all that.

Paris, August 1922

I WENT TO THE Louvre today, for the first time in eight years, the first time since the War, and was overwhelmed, confused by the

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

profusion. More confused than impressed. Only the two Leonardos and the Rembrandts made the same old impression on me, and a little less impressive, but still well above the flood of other pictures, Greco's "King Ferdinand" and one or two French pictures of the 15th century. ... When one considers the absolutely middle-class and reactionary character of the majority of the French—including the economic structure of the country—it seems impossible that any socially or internationally progressive spirit could reign here. Yet it was always the same throughout the 19th century when the Academy and the "cultured" public constantly treated anything and anyone new with contempt. Yet 19th-century France was the leading spirit of the arts, and all the masters of that time have disappeared in favour of painters who were then only recognised by a tiny minority. Perhaps there is something to be learned here, socially, politically; maybe France is the very place where a minority of talent and energy could triumph, as it did in the French Revolution.

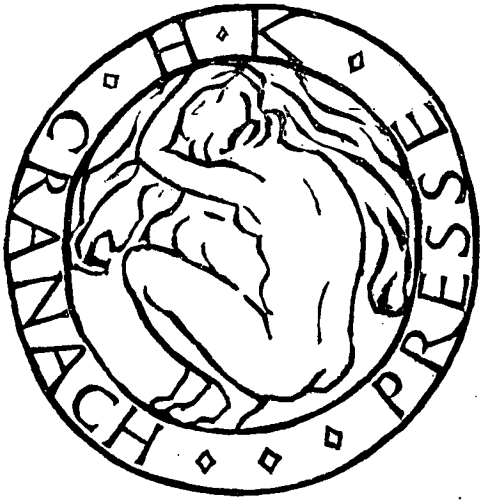
The greatest contrast between Paris and Berlin is the harmony that comes from an old tradition, of the long intermingling of social functions in France; not in single persons but in their roles. The *rentier*, the *cocotte*, the lawyer, the civil servant, the worker, all mesh so easily together as social functions, they have become such set types, that the whole social organisation of Paris is like a product of nature —it has become "natural." *Bei uns* every function is in a state of becoming; it has to be artificially helped along or happens by chance or is arbitrary. Compared with Paris the German capital is like a muddle of separate entities. Everyone is at home in his own place in France, whether prostitute or banker; while in Berlin everyone has to find his own way to social relationships.

13 August, 1922

VISITED Aristide Maillol at Marly; I had not seen him since 1914. He greeted me with outstretched arms and tears in his eyes. I, too, was much moved to see him, so aged, grey, shrunken. He had created little in the intervening years, although there were two beautifully conceived works—the torso of a young woman striding forward and a design for a war memorial (a wounded naked warrior with a steel helmet). Apart from these he has only done three war memorials which he gave to little towns in his home district, and for which he had used female figures done before and had only had to drape—such as my own "Crouching Woman" and "Pomona." The French Republic has not yet ordered a single war memorial from him.

Rapallo, 21 September, 1922

ARRIVED HERE EARLY to visit Gordon Craig whom I had not seen since 1914. He came down the country road to meet me with his grown-up son, and seemed hardly aged at all. We went up to his little house, right over the sea, from which it is only separated by the road and the olive trees. It is very simple, but smothered in flowers. One goes in by an open staircase, all covered in flowers, and inside he has hung the walls with greyish sail-cloth like tents, with bookshelves everywhere of rough pinewood. They contain almost exclusively works on the theatre, and must be a unique specialist library, all that remains of his Theatre School in Florence. Light and spare, concentrated with religious intensity on a single purpose in life, the rooms are almost monastic. Yet I find this single-mindedness, in our times, somewhat childish, and I felt as if I were making a visit to a children's nursery, particularly when Mrs. Craig and their son Teddy suddenly came out with some bloodthirsty political opinions. The whole family with the two children have lived here for five years since the Theatre School failed, all their thoughts and hopes fixed on a non-existent theatre, the project of an ideal theatre for which they only need to find a patron. I said I should have the feeling, if I had



ROUNDEL (*figure by Maillol, lettering by Gill*) MADE FOR KESSLER'S CRANACH PRESS (1925)

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to live and work here, that the instrument I was playing had some strings missing. Craig laughed and said on the contrary, he was trying to play on two or three strings and the rest of the piano was left out. He said how sorry he was that he and Max Reinhardt had never collaborated; Reinhardt with the qualities that complement his own was the only producer he could work with. Stanislavsky—indeed the Russians in general—and the Americans—were impossible, Craig said, and he could not abide them. Reinhardt had the practical commonsense that he lacked. He still believes that he will find a theatre, but until he does they have to live here, stranded, because the £250 a year which is all he has, is enough to live on here though it would not last six weeks in London. The children are growing up wild, without any schooling.

We discussed *Hamlet* for my Cranach Press, and he will come to Weimar in the autumn at my expense to supervise the printing of the woodcut engravings he is doing for it. He talked about his working methods. When something excites him the work runs away with him until suddenly the fire goes out and he can do nothing. That is why he is always nervous about undertaking a piece of work, hesitates, makes difficulties for himself and everybody else, because he never knows how long the fire will last.

It really is a tragedy to see this genius living in exile without any serious work to do when his vision and ideas have inspired theatres from Russia to America for twenty years past, and theatrical revolutions are going on now that still draw on his capital. He does not believe in any of the northern countries, believes that if anything comes of his ideas it will be in Italy. Here the people have the stuff in them for great theatre; there is immanent natural talent and enjoyment here. In northern lands everything is affectation and criticism. Even the Russians are only clever monkeys in the theatre and there is no reality behind the optical illusions they put on. But in spite of their lack of taste the Italians have the stuff of real and great theatre in them.

Berlin, 7/14 November 1922

THE REICHSMARK is 9000 to the dollar today, and the rate shows our decline like the fever chart of a sick patient. Heard at dinner that the *S.P.D.* has refused a coalition with Chancellor Wirth, so the Wirth cabinet has fallen. The successors suggested are Konrad Adenauer and Andreas Hermes. The Social Democrats are most unwilling to take the chancellorship because of the difficulties expected in the winter and for foreign policy reasons.

Berlin, 15 November, 1922

GERHART HAUPTMANN was honoured at the University today, in the new Hall, an attempt at a Michelangelo effect, with a horrible mural by Arthur Kampf. Some Professor of Literature (I think his name was Petersen) made a colourless and boring speech, followed by further professorial effusions. The Chairman of the Goethe Society distinguished himself by his tactlessness, delivering his address face-to-face, so that poor Hauptmann had to stand up through the whole speech. One student spoke who did have something to say, and said it so glowingly and with such youthful enthusiasm that the meeting was delighted with him. Only a professor sitting next to me seemed to disapprove of him and muttered throughout; he wore gold-rimmed glasses and had all the other marks of a *boche* about him and seemed to be in an almost ungovernable rage the entire time. Hauptmann read a short and not very profound speech, but I was happy to hear him come out clearly on the humane and conciliatory side.

The crudely vulgar behaviour of the students and professors was what struck me most. The students had voted—I believe in a proportion of two to one—to boycott the whole Hauptmann ceremony since Hauptmann had admitted himself to be a republican and was therefore no longer a *charakterfester Deutscher*. I hear from Sam Fischer (the publisher) that this Petersen who delivered the congratulatory speech had come to see Fischer two days ago to ask him to cancel the invitation to President Ebert; it would be painful to the University to have to have the republican Head of State as a guest! When Fischer refused this request Petersen said then, at least, he might cancel the invitation to the Chairman of the *Reichstag*; it was going too far to invite two Social Democrats! At the end of the ceremony d'Albert played Beethoven's *Appassionata* beautifully. Whereupon, again a professor sitting by me distinguished himself, this time by whispering resentfully to his neighbour that he supposed it was a composition of the pianist's own. Beethoven seems to be as little at home in Berlin University as President Ebert.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the evening a gala performance of Hauptmann's *Florian Geyer* where Hauptmann sat in a box with a spotlight on him, looking like Goethe's double (or perhaps an actor playing Goethe in a film). Between the acts the actor playing Florian practically pulled him on to the stage from his box. The audience was in an uproar, naturally of enthusiasm—rather different from the first time it was ever played, when I was almost torn in two in a frightful riot.

There was a supper-party for Hauptmann afterwards and I congratulated him on being the only real "poet of the people" in modern German literature. He questioned this, saying Goethe had been a people's poet too and had his inspirations and his material from the people, and not like Schiller, from intellectual complexities... Faust, Werther, Goetz von Berlichingen—they were all folk-heroes, like his own "Weavers." At this comparison, which he made himself, his outward resemblance to Goethe struck me as very odd indeed.

28 November, 1922

DINNER WITH the Bergers, sumptuous home, and plenty of millionaires, including young Thyssen. The gem of the evening was Frau von Wassilko, the Ukrainian Minister's wife, a small thin woman consisting entirely of brilliantly dyed red hair and diamonds. Where the face usually is, there were quantities of paint and enamel. She is said to have been a Viennese singer and then the Mistress of the Shah of Persia before becoming the Ambassadress of the Ukraine. The diamonds on her fingers were like pigeon's eggs and of the finest cut; her neck was hung with rows of diamonds intermingled with strands of pearls, right down to her lap. I thought at first she must be wearing the confiscated wealth of the entire Ukrainian aristocracy; then I heard that she is not the wife of the Soviet Ambassador, but of Petylura's.

London, 17 December, 1922

ARRIVED AT TEN in London from Harwich. I remember leaving with Rodin on a Friday, a week before the War started eight years ago. As we sailed from Folkestone I asked him if he wanted something to eat and he said, *"Non, je n'ai pas faim. Je regarde la nature. La nature me nourrit."* And when we got to Boulogne there was the ultimatum in the papers and I knew for certain war was coming, and that Austria *wanted* war.... Parted from Rodin at the Gare du Nord where Rodin arranged to meet me at tea on Wednesday at Countess Greffulhe's, but by Wednesday I was in Cologne, waiting for the declaration of war. All this ran through my mind as the train ran into London through the sooty, common suburbs. Late in the afternoon, I walked along the Embankment towards Westminster, the sun shone on the wet streets and low heavy clouds scudded across the sky, the whole city was violet and gold, and the light turned the Thames to a glowing copper.

Paris, 8 January, 1923

LUNCHEON WITH Jean Cocteau at *Boeuf sur le Toit*, a sort of very modern artists' pub in the Rue Boissy d'Anglas. English furniture, Picassos on the walls. He introduced me to his friend Raymond Radiguet whom he called "the new Rimbaud," and described a long illness he had just suffered. He had spoken to Misia Sert and repeated what she had said on seeing me again, adding that she had expressed herself embarrassed as well as moved. He seemed impressed that one who is not even a Frenchwoman should feel so, and the qualification sharpened his remark. I had felt a similar feeling in Sert. Naturally we had to talk about the occupation of the Ruhr, which (at any rate to me) he was bound to condemn. He wants to have his Ballet *Les Mariés de la Tour d'Eiffel* produced by Max Reinhardt, and Radiguet hopes to get his two novels published in Germany. In the afternoon I went to see Pierre Jean Jouve, the writer, and we talked politics. He said the tragedy of France is that she is a second-class nation that tries by every means to belong to the first rank; although intellectually France is still in the first rank. Of Paul Valéry who is acclaimed now as a great poet he said he is a *"versificateur"* who is trying to weld Malherbe and Mallarmé into a traditional form. And in the theatre, the *Vieux Colombier* is inventing for itself a tradition out of Gordon Craig, Reinhardt, and the Russians. Everywhere the search for a stay, a corset, instead of trying to breathe freely. (This view is confirmed by my conversation with Cocteau—he tries to modernise du Bellay and praises Satie for going back to the musical style of the 18th century.) In short, reaction triumphs here, even in literature and the arts.

London, 3 March, 1923

RODIN to lunch, and I was sorry to see him looking transparent, old, and weak; the only friend I have left from my childhood days.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then I dined with General Thomson and Hugh Massingham (of *The Nation*) in the United Services Club. Massingham has just come back from the Riviera and says all the French are crazy, he couldn't find a sane Frenchman. "They are all lunatics," and it's impossible to talk to them. I tried to argue that not all Frenchmen are imperialists and some want genuine reparations and genuine security—that is our only hope. But he would not be persuaded. Thomson, handsome, vital, and amusing told a story about the week before the War, when he was serving on the Imperial General Staff under Sir Henry Wilson in the Operations Department. It was a clique of close friends, all on first-name terms and all of high social standing. One day Wilson called a meeting and asked them what they would do if asked to take action against the officers mutinying in Ireland against English policy there. Wilson was covertly suggesting that they should refuse to obey orders. Everybody was silent and Wilson, who did not trust Thomson, asked him for an answer first. Thomson said he would like to have the question in writing and would give a written reply. At the moment he only wanted to say this: that they "were coming perilously near to a conspiracy." Other officers (whose support Wilson had counted upon) agreed with Thomson, and Wilson, much annoyed, had to give up his plan.

General French had resigned over the same question because of something the King said to him when, asking him for his opinion on the mutiny of British officers in Ireland, he made his own attitude clear "that it was a matter between officers"; in other words the King tacitly approved of the mutinous officers. At which French sent in his resignation, which was accepted... all the more honourable of him because he was "broke" and hadn't any idea how one could even exist on less than £5,000 a year. Massingham, to whom the story was new, was shocked at the King's attitude and used a rather strong expression—he said it under his breath but I heard it—"to think of it, that puppy!" The mutiny of the King against his own constitutional government is really worthy of Wilhelm II; I would never have thought it of George V. It reminded me vividly of a luncheon with the Asquiths ten days before War broke out, when the Irish Guards hissed Asquith on his way from Buckingham Palace to Downing Street and made him late for lunch. After lunch old Jules Roche who was also a guest said to me, in a corner, *"C'est triste d'assister à l'écroulement d'un grand Empire."* Roche again, at tea at the Asquiths the next day, when Prince Lichnowsky (Imperial German Ambassador) and Lady Randolph Churchill met: *"Sanguel"* This was the atmosphere in which Grey had to deal with the Austrian ultimatum and the question of War or Peace in Europe....

Berlin, 18 December, 1924

TALKED to Albert Einstein at a bankers' banquet where we both felt ourselves a little out of place. When I asked what he was working upon, he said he was "just considering." By reflecting on (*nachdenken*) any scientific problem one was bound to make some progress, for every scientific proposition, without exception, is incorrect. This comes of the inadequacy of human thought and the impossibility of comprehending nature, so that any logical formulation of nature is bound not to fit somewhere. Every time he reflects on a scientific proposition it upsets him, and that leads to a new and more exact formulation, which in its turn is not quite correct, and this leads to still new formulations and so on.

The irony in Einstein's face, that touch of *"Pierrot lunaire,"* the smiling and suffering scepticism that plays about his eyes, gets stronger all the time. When he is talking and one watches his face, one feels he is smiling not only at what can be seen of human pride but at its very essence.

Banyuls, 5–6 January, 1925

ON THE WAY to visit Maillol I saw his War Memorial at Port Vendres in the harbour. It is simply a variant of his memorial to Cézanne, and a typographically dreadful inscription on its base spoils it. My first impression was of academic coldness; it could in fact, be by one of Maillol's better pupils. It disappointed me, but looking at it longer I found something in it of Maillol's greatness: the noble rhythm and flow of line, deeply thought out. But it is not one of his best works. When I told Maillol on arrival that I had been to see it, he said at once he was dissatisfied with it. We went into his studio where he played about with his spatula on figures in clay. A small crouching female figure, which Maillol described as a variant of my large stone sculpture in Berlin. This one is to be viewed from one side only, whereas mine is in the round to be looked at

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from all sides. Maillol said one leg was always a bother, didn't belong; but he would get it, with patience he would achieve it. He went on talking about women, slender or short and sturdy—long legs or short legs—it is not a matter of short or long but of finding the harmony of the figure. D'Annunzio had thought his female figures had too short legs—that proved he knew nothing of sculpture. He, Maillol, had married a short woman, so he had always been dominated by short legs; that was how he had discovered the harmony of sturdy figures. If he had married a Parisienne with long legs, he would have found the harmony of long legs. Before he married, when he used as models the slender women of South America, he had painted the harmony of tall women. I looked for a long time at the lovely naked figure of a slender young girl—no feet yet and the head only sketched in clay—which in fact proves that he is masterly in portraying thin young creatures. The arms are still in the experimental stage, in clay, and stretched out backwards. Maillol said he might change them to come forward against the bosom; at the moment the space between torso and arms was too long and broad. It is one of his most beautiful figures and I asked him for a copy in light red ceramic. Later we went to see his memorial to the war dead at Ceret. It is really great and touching. Simply a woman of the people, who sits mourning, her head upon her hand. The figure itself is powerful and expressive; the stone, light grey, fits into its surroundings; and the position of the sculpture—in the broad shabby square under massive plantain trees in front of a row of simple old grey houses over which can be seen towering the mountain spur—is completely successful. It is the only one of Maillol's three war memorials that is a complete success. One of the few really satisfying modern memorials I know.

Abergavenny (Wales), 20 January, 1925

HERE TO SEE Eric Gill about a commission to illustrate Virgil's *Georgics*. My motor-car driver had never heard of the place. We drove up a beautiful and lonely valley into a narrow lane that seemed to be going right into the wilderness. Behind the ruins of a monastery the lane became narrower still, and the driver more and more worried until we finally stopped on a steep slope and a local told us we should have to go up on foot, which I did and came to another half-ruined monastery. I wandered about in the building until I found several women sitting with two dignified-looking monks in front of a big wood fire. I recognised Mrs. Gill who said her husband had gone to meet me. At last he came in, looking like Tolstoy in a half-peasant, half-monkish costume. The meeting, after the war years, was

ERIC GILL : SELF PORTRAIT (1927)

not in the least dramatic, but we were both inwardly much moved. Gill said that for himself and his friends, and he could see for me too, the arts had now taken second place. Our main purpose must be the regeneration of life. That was why he was here "trying hard to be good," which was not always easy. At the same time, one must work, if only so as not to starve. In fact he is very active and showed me a number of delicate beechwood carvings and reliefs of his own (and his son-in-law's), and many woodcuts, engravings, portraits, all of a high quality. The whole family had come to live here in the wilderness as an experiment which, up to now, was successful; they do everything themselves and are happy and content. I showed Gill the woodcuts Maillol had made for me, and we discussed the Virgil, for which he agreed to make the chapter initials. Then in the dark of night I started off again for my country hotel The Angel, at Abergavenny, which is by no means bad.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Berlin, 29 January, 1925

PIRANDELLO'S *Six Persons in Search of an Author* at Max Reinhardt's "Komoedie." A piece of virtuosity that occasionally rises from cunning skill to real art. The problems of mixing two or three actions on the stage at one time and of bringing the audience over the gaps without losing the mood, have been solved by Pirandello with consummate impudence and assurance.

20 February, 1925

TEA WITH Albert Einstein, who is about to go to the Argentine. Of his successes he said he had simply had "more luck" than others. He knew a great many scientists who had the same intellectual right to make discoveries as he had; they had just been a little less fortunate. I said he appeared to have well-developed "sense of place"—I meant, a sense for the gap through which a problem could be solved.

Manchester-to-Bradford, 28 February, 1925

THE JOURNEY through the cold hard treeless hill landscape made a great impression on me. It resembles a face, sharply etched and pitiless, the birthplace of the industrial revolution and world-wide industrial capitalism, as well as the birthplace of English radicalism. There is a power about it as of an antique world, grey and sombre, a soul made from coal-dust and yet with a harsh untamable energy such as one feels in the Roman *Campagna*. This is the authentic England; everywhere else England wears masks. I don't know when I have been so emotionally shaken and gripped by a landscape in so short a space of time. It was like lifting the veil from a secret that I have always apprehended but never clearly expressed to myself.

London, 13 March, 1925

ERIC GILL and Will Rothenstein had lunch with me, and afterwards Gill showed me a beautiful head of a sleeping Christ that he had just carved in stone. He suggested he should make me woodcuts for a Cranach Press edition of the *Song of Solomon*, and again for an Indian work on love, *Ananga-Ranga*, which he was burning to illustrate. I asked about this Hindu book and he said it was "really thirty-four ways of doing it." Gill is a perfectly innocent mixture of religion and eroticism. He defines his own religion as being "fully in love with Christ." He looks like a monk in a beggar's order, bushy full beard, unkempt and rather long hair, his grey-brown eyes bloodshot yet pure, sometimes with an almost fanatical gleam, and a monk's robe that reaches almost to his feet. He is an extraordinary phenomenon—with his great talents, his rejection of the modern commercial world, his eccentric religious near-mania, which is in fact an all-embracing voluptuousness, his denial of moralities, his eroticised asceticism, his austerity—it all reminds me of a Church Father in the desert.

London, 19 March, 1925

NOEL COWARD'S *Vortex* at the Comedy Theatre. He plays the lead himself, a young drug addict. A rather powerful play: Coward is superb, staggeringly realistic but at the same time with a masterly restraint. He plays, without any cheap tricks, the son of a vain pleasure-seeking depraved and heartless beautiful woman. The only thing is, the play has no ending: since there is, in fact, no way out.

London, 23 March, 1925

WILL ROTHENSTEIN took me to luncheon with Sir Sidney Lee in an Italian restaurant (very bad). Lee is the biographer of Edward VII, and I expressed as politely as might be my opinion of the complete intellectual emptiness and lack of originality of his hero. He confirmed that in the whole enormous mass of the King's letters there was scarcely one political or any other kind of idea. And after 1880 he suffered a definite mental decline. He quoted without contradicting it, the judgment of the *New York Times* that Edward VII and the Kaiser were "two of a kind." Especially noticeable in Edward's letters to women was the completely businesslike way he arranged a *rendez-vous*, with no sign of gallantry or mention of love. Even these "love letters" were totally without wit, charm, or ideas. Yet as King he interfered more in politics than was really compatible with the British Constitution. On the same day that the *Entente* between England and France was signed, Edward (who happened to be in Copenhagen) suggested completely on his own initiative an *entente* between England and Russia to Isvolsky, then Russian Minister there and later Foreign Minister. They made a note of their conversation at once, and initialled two copies. Lee had actually seen Edward's copy.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Paris, 30 March, 1925

AT DINNER we talked of Anatole France, and a friend of his described the meeting between France and Einstein at the Adlon in Berlin soon after the war. France had clearly found nothing much to say to Einstein, while Einstein was deeply moved by the meeting. The friend was unable to explain France's lack of contact with Einstein. I said Einstein was a deeply religious man, convinced of the existence of God, while Anatole France was a sceptic. It was much as if Jehovah had suddenly appeared to Voltaire. Voltaire would have had very little contact with Jehovah, whereas Jehovah would have understood Voltaire and his scepticism as an emanation of his own Godhead, as a facet of God's mind—and would have been delighted with him! . . .

Berlin, 26 April, 1925

VOTED TODAY in the Presidential election. A rainy cold morning which kept the streets empty. At Potsdamerplatz only a few youths with swastikas and big clubs, as blond and stupid as young calves. Soon after midnight the election result was clear. Hindenburg is President. What will follow may well be one of the darkest chapters of German history.

Berlin, 22–28 December, 1925

DIAGHILEV and his Ballet are on a guest tour at the Deutsches Kuenstler-Theater. They danced *Biches, Tricorne,* and the *Sailors.* Storms of applause. I went back-stage afterwards and congratulated him. Supper with Diaghilev, Serge Lifar, Nouvel, Boris Kochno, at which Diaghilev told the horrible story of his Spanish dancer. He thought he had found a new Nijinsky, a young Spaniard called Garcia. When he went to see him in Barcelona for the first time, the old woman where he lived called him *el loco,* "the madman." But Diaghilev took no notice and took the boy back to London —in the middle of the war (it was 1916). One day Garcia went out and seeing a red lamp burning in front of St. Martin's in the Fields asked an old beggar woman who sat before the church door whether this was a bordello. Then he gave her all his money and said, "What a joke!—even God Himself lives in a whorehouse in London!" Whereupon he tried to force his way into the bordello and in the end broke the door in. When he didn't turn up for the performance, Diaghilev informed the police. Late that night they found him in front of the altar quite naked, having tried to hang himself. He had gone completely mad, and died later in an asylum.

DIAGHILEV

NIJINSKY AND STRAVINSKY

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Maurice Cranston

Sartre and Violence

A Philosopher's Commitment to a Pledge

SOON AFTER the editorial entitled *Capitulation ou contre-escalade* appeared in Sartre's review *Les Temps modernes* last August, I happened to meet a leading Soviet writer (who had better, perhaps, be nameless). He was visibly shocked by the article, and though he did not hesitate to say that most of Russia's self-styled friends were more trouble than her enemies, Sartre really was, he said, a menace. I tried to say in defence of the editorial that it was meant to shock; that indeed *"la menace"* was precisely what Sartre wished to recommend.

The argument of the editorial was simple. The communist states—or, more exactly, what is called "the socialist camp"—must either threaten to intervene in the Viet Nam war by "counter-escalation" against American escalation or witness the triumph of "anti-revolutionary imperialism" all over the world. The call is addressed especially to Russia:

> In Formosa, in Okinawa, in Thailand, in the Philippines, in the Gulf of Tonkin are the air and naval bases and the establishments of the American Seventh Fleet. Seven years ago, the Soviet artillerymen showed that they already knew how to fire on target at a distance of six thousand miles.

The editorial, which is signed "T.M." (for *Les Temps modernes*), represents one of Sartre's *ex cathedra* pronouncements, and it does not fail to mention that what it recommends may mean world war:

> To proclaim that there is a limit beyond which blow will be met by blow; to rely, in doing this, on the support of all those people who are sickened by the American killings no less than by their own impotence to help a Viet Nam which fights for them all; deliberately to run the risk of war today: such is the surest way of avoiding having to choose tomorrow between the reality of an imposed war and the destruction one after the other of all the revolutionary states and movements of Asia and elsewhere.

According to Sartre's analysis, "imperialism has been on the offensive for six years" in San Domingo, Brazil, West and Central Africa, Indonesia, Bolivia and the Argentine among other places; and is preparing to attack China. "The U.S.A. is convinced that the U.S.S.R. will shrink to the end before a show of force . . . it counts on the U.S.S.R. impassively witnessing the humiliation or the massacre of the Chinese." Hence Sartre's call for Russian "counter-escalation."

Hence, equally, my Russian friend's indignation. "There's no *misanthrope* like a French intellectual who calls himself a humanist. . . . No one who really cared for the Soviet Union, or for peace, could have published such a manifesto," he said. I agreed with him, but added that his very surprise suggested that he had never read Sartre carefully enough. Peace is not the thing that Sartre cares most about. What he believes in is Revolution. And precisely because he believes in Revolution, his heart is more in China than in Russia.

FOR YEARS Sartre has been advocating a new Popular Front in France with the French Communist Party as its leading element. In a television interview with Olivier Todd a few months ago on the B.B.C. (Sartre refuses to appear on the French television because it is a Gaullist state monopoly), he said, "I go along

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

these days with the communists," adding a few of his usual sharp words against the socialists, that is "socialists" in the sense of what he sometimes calls "the Wilsons, the Brandts, the Mollets, the Nennis." Sartre would never join the French Communist Party, and he has sometimes criticised it bitterly; but at the same time he will not tolerate criticism of the party from anyone who does not identify himself with its purpose, its power and its methods; for such criticism is "anti-communism"; and, says Sartre, "an anti-communist is a cur, I'll stick to that."

In a recent article François Bondy wrote:

> The [French] communists are trying to reconcile themselves to Jean-Paul Sartre as he is.... In March 1966 the communist organ *La Nouvelle Critique* devoted almost an entire issue to Sartre, observing (no doubt primarily for internal consumption) that Sartre, whatever one might think of him, was a "world famous personality," and that people abroad could not understand why the French communists attacked him.[1]

Such gropings towards reconciliation may well be based on an illusion. It is often suggested that Sartre stays outside the French Communist Party because it is not liberal enough. When he said, in February 1963, "If I were an Italian I would join the Italian Communist Party," the remark was widely assumed to indicate a preference for the more moderate and less dogmatic characteristics of the P.C.I. as compared to the P.C.F. But in truth it is not the extremism of the P.C.F. which disturbs Sartre. He is more extreme than it. His "Marxism" is on the far side and not the moderate side of the party.[2]

The P.C.F., even in its more "cretinous" moments (to use one of Sartre's epithets) has preserved a certain sense of prudence and caution. The defence and welfare of the Soviet Union and the other communist régimes in Eastern Europe has always been its first concern. It would never want to imperil these institutions for the sake of some utopian dream of universal revolution or even of anti-colonialist liberation. Its posture is defensive; and in the propaganda of the P.C.F. since 1945 there has been far more talk about "peace" and "anti-militarism" than there has been about "revolution" and "war" and "militancy." The French Communists' attitude towards de Gaulle has been one of undisguised relief. The General's foreign policy is so close to what they themselves would have followed that they hardly even pretend to wish that there had been another government between 1958 and 1966. Such accommodation to reality is wholly un-Sartrian. When Sartre is against something, he is one hundred per cent against it. He is, as he would have it, uncompromising. He does not perhaps realise how very alien is such an attitude to communist policies and methods. All Sartre's "refusals"—his rejection of the Nobel Prize, his refusal to appear on the French T.V., his refusal to visit America—are in the tradition of Protestant personal witness; so that, ironically, even when he tries his best to speak up for communism he betrays himself as something non-communist, non-proletarian, non-party—in short, as the typical bourgeois individualist.

COMPROMISE, which is so important in the art of politics, is morally distasteful to Sartre. This is one of the reasons why he is scornful towards the idea of "co-existence," which savours so much of compromise. His own anti-Americanism is unlimited, and he believes that the chief common basis for a new Popular Front ought to be "opposition to the Atlantic Alliance." He repeated the suggestion in an interview reported in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (30 November 1966):

> The world is not dominated by two great powers, but by one alone, America. And peaceful co-existence, despite its very positive aspects, serves only the U.S.A. It is thanks to peaceful co-existence and the Sino-Soviet dispute (which is largely a consequence of peaceful co-existence), that the Americans can bomb Viet Nam in all tranquillity.

The occasion of this particular interview was Sartre's agreeing to act as chairman of Bertrand Russell's "War Crimes Tribunal." His interlocutor asked him if the atrocities of the Viet Cong would be investigated by the tribunal as well as those of the Americans and South Koreans. Sartre said no.

> I refuse to put on the same plane the actions of a group of poor hunted peasants, obliged to make an iron discipline prevail in their ranks, and the actions of an immense army supported by a super-industrialised country of two hundred

[1] François Bondy, "Jean-Paul Sartre and Politics," *Journal of Contemporary History* (Spring, 1967).

[2] An Italian commentator notes that Sartre, far from supporting the liberal kind of de-Stalinisation, "ridicules those democratic techniques (elections, the division of power and so forth) to which de-Stalinisation itself appeals." P. Chiedi, *Sartre e il marxismo* (1965).

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

million inhabitants. Besides, it is not the Vietnamese who have invaded America and caused a deluge of fire to descend on a foreign people. During the Algerian war, I always refused to put the terrorism of the bomb-attack, which was the only weapon at the disposal of the Algerians, on the same level as the actions and exactions of a richly equipped army of 500,000 men occupying the whole of the country. It is the same thing in Viet Nam.

Several of the things Sartre says in the early part of this interview may well puzzle readers of his theoretical works. For example, in justifying the setting up of Bertrand Russell's tribunal, Sartre invokes notions drawn from natural law and "objective juridical criteria" which are repudiated in his moral philosophy, both in its earlier existentialist and its later Marxified form. But towards the end of the interview Sartre lets the cat out of the bag. He admits that the appeal to objective juridical criteria is a pure propagandist device.

> We have been accused of *petit bourgeois* legalism. It is true, and I accept this criticism. But who do we want to convince? The classes who are struggling against capitalism and who are already convinced ("crimes" or not) that they must fight to the end against imperialism. Or do we want to convince that very large fringe of the middle class which is at present hesitating? It is *petit bourgeois* masses who must be awakened and shaken up today, because their alliance —even on the home front—with the working class is so much to be desired. And it is by legalism that one can open their eyes.

That he should address himself in this way to *petit bourgeois* myths is, in a sense, the measure of Sartre's feeling of despair concerning the common man of France, and indeed of Europe. As the prosperity introduced by the Gaullist régime and the Common Market economy has touched more and more people, and increasingly turned the workers into *petit bourgeois* masses, with a quasi-American ethos of good living and high consumption, Sartre has grown more pessimistic. And as Europeans thus prove less and less likely to give him the revolution he yearns for, his imagination has been increasingly caught by the revolutionary possibilities of peoples outside Europe.

Bondy, in his article, speaks of "Sartre's increasingly noticeable rejection of the Europeans as the chosen instrument of the revolution and as the destroyer of the bourgeoisie, because the proletariat has itself fallen victim to bourgeois and apolitical tendencies." "Simultaneously," adds Bondy, "Sartre turns towards the real 'Damned of the Earth,' the masses in the colonial territories, have-nots who are expropriated even by their own people, and who become the new proletariat in the sense that Marx used the word, those who have nothing to lose but their chains."[3]

Apart from the Chinese, it is the Cubans who have excited Sartre's most fervent admiration in recent years. Long before Castro's revolution, Sartre wrote a film scenario, *L'Engrenage*, about a small republic in Central America where a revolution is thwarted by the intimidation of a neighbouring Great Power; its hero is trapped between the need to placate the Great Power and his wish to satisfy the socialist aspiration of his followers. Castro's triumph, in Sartre's eyes, is to have done what seemed, when he wrote *L'Engrenage*, impossible: that is to have resisted the Great Power *and* to have pressed on with the programme of socialism. The fact that the material benefits of Cuban socialism may have been small does not worry Sartre. What he admires is the continued revolutionary atmosphere, which the close proximity of a hostile power serves to stimulate and perpetuate. If Cuba were as far away from America as is, for example, Rumania, can one doubt that revolutionary fervour would have faltered, just as it has in Rumania, where the standard of living improves and a robust scepticism flourishes? Unlike Sir Alec Douglas-Home, Sartre does *not* "prefer a well-fed communist." He prefers his communist both under-fed and resentful, for it is then that the will to revolution is likely to be strongest.

When Sartre speaks of "revolution" he means violent revolution. The revisionism of a Bernstein or a Kautsky, like the "quietism" of a Camus, is anathema to Sartre. He is convinced that nothing deserving the

[3] See also Sartre's preface to F. Fanon, *Les Damnés de la terre*. It should perhaps be explained that Bondy, in the main critical of Sartre's politics, approves of Sartre's anti-colonialism. "It must be said once more that although Sartre and his friends may have seemed extreme and provocative in their uncompromising and originally solitary condemnation of French colonial rule, today, even if by other means than they expected, developments have proved them right. In any case, it was an attitude and a struggle which redounded to their credit." This seems to me debatable. It is one thing to respect de Gaulle's peaceful transfer of sovereignty to the local people of France's former colonies; another to support and encourage, as Sartre did, nationalistic terrorism in Indo-China, Algeria, and elsewhere.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

name of a revolution can be brought about by "non-violent" or "lawful" means, because it seems to him obvious that the bourgeoisie not only *will* use violence, but is already using violence. Several of his literary works have turned on the argument that nothing valuable can be accomplished in politics unless one is ready to "soil one's hands." The hero of his play *Les Mains sales* (a significant title) says: "My hands are filthy. I've dipped them up to the elbows in blood and shit. So what? Do you think you can govern and keep your spirit white?" And the hero of his play *Le Diable et le Bon Dieu*, says, in his last speech, "They told you I would be a hangman and a butcher . . . I shall not flinch. I shall make them hate me because I know no other way of loving them. . . . There is this war to fight, and I will fight it." Sartre himself said, in a newspaper interview (*France Observateur*, 1 February 1962): "For me, the essential problem is to refute that theory according to which the left ought not to answer violence with violence." It is interesting to notice that he calls this the "essential" problem.

Readers of Sartre's novels and stories may have noticed there a certain tendency to rejoice in violence. For example, there is the scene at the end of *La Mort dans l'âme*, when Mathieu, the philosophy teacher who has been called up, attaches himself to a glamorous unit of Chasseurs, and dies a Hollywood-style hero's death shooting German soldiers one by one from a church tower: "He fired. He was cleansed. He was all-powerful. He was free." There are similar episodes in some of Sartre's writings which romanticise the Resistance. But for an understanding of why Sartre assigns the importance he does to violence we must look to his chief work on social theory, the *Critique de la raison dialectique*, published in 1960. In this book Sartre claims to outline a new form of Marxism, one modernised and reinvigorated by an addition of existentialism. It has always seemed to me that what Sartre offers is not a modernised Marxism but a modernised Hobbesism. Sartre takes over Thomas Hobbes' theory that men in a state of nature are at war with one another, and he suggests a single explanation for it: scarcity. Nature, says Sartre, is niggardly: there is not enough to go round, and that is why each man is an enemy of every other. Man as we know him has been shaped by scarcity. "Violence and counter-violence are perhaps contingencies, but they are contingent necessities. . . . As long as scarcity remains our destiny, evil is irremediable, and this must be the basis of our ethics."[4] Sartre says that all human history—at any rate, all human history hitherto—has been a history of shortage and of a bitter struggle against shortage. And it is this *scarcity*, according to the *Critique*, which makes human relationships intelligible. Scarcity is the key to understanding the attitude of men to one another, and to understanding the social structures men have built up during their life on earth. Scarcity, says Sartre, both unites and divides us.[5] It unites us because it is only by united efforts that we are able to struggle at all successfully against scarcity; it divides us because each of us knows that it is only the existence of others which prevents there being abundance for oneself.

Scarcity, then, is "the motor of history." Men cannot eliminate scarcity altogether. In this sense, men are powerless or impotent. The best men can do is to try to overcome scarcity by collaboration with others. But such collaboration is itself paradoxical, for each of the collaborators knows that it is the existence in the world of others that makes scarcity. I am a rival to you, and you are a rival to me. When I work together with others to struggle against scarcity, I am working with those whose existence makes that work necessary; and by my work I nourish my competitors and rivals. Scarcity, then, not only shapes our attitude to the natural world, but shapes our attitude to our neighbours. Scarcity makes us all rivals, and yet compels us to collaborate with our rivals; for being impotent alone, we can only struggle effectively against scarcity by the division of labour and other such joint endeavours.

Nature, however, is "inert" and indifferent to human welfare. The world we live in is part of the world of nature and in part the world that has been made by our forbears in the course of

[4] I quote this sentence from an abridgement of Sartre's *Critique*, published with Sartre's blessing, by R. D. Laing and D. G. Cooper, a book which bears the significant title *Reason and Violence* (Tavistock Press, 1964).

[5] "The negative unity of interiorised scarcity in the reification of reciprocity re-exteriorises itself for us all in the unity of the world as the common area of our conflicts: and this unity we reinteriorise in a new negative unity: all united by the fact of all inhabiting a world defined by scarcity." *Critique de la raison dialectique* (Gallimard, Paris, 1960), p. 211.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their long struggle against scarcity. Sartre calls it the world of the *Practico-Inert*. The world is the world of *Praxis* in so far as it is a world shaped by the work and projects of its past and present inhabitants. This is the world to the extent that it is man-made. But the world is also the passive, or inert, world of Nature on which man has had to work. Ironically, many of the things that men have done with the aim of making the world more bearable, with the aim of diminishing scarcity, have had the effect not of improving, but of worsening the world. Sartre gives the example of Chinese peasants cutting down wood to make fires and to build with; and doing this on so large a scale that they effectively deforest their land, and so expose themselves to the hazards and disasters of constant floods. Men are tormented by their own inventions in the world of the *Practico-Inert*.

Thus, in a hostile universe, defined by scarcity, man becomes the enemy of man. In a typically Sartrian phrase, man becomes anti-man, *le contre-homme*. And in a paragraph which is dramatic enough for a speech in one of his plays, Sartre writes:

> Nothing indeed—neither wild beasts nor microbes—could be more terrible for man than this intelligent, flesh-eating, cruel species, which knows how to follow and outwit the human intelligence and of which the aim is precisely the destruction of man. This species is manifestly our own, as each of us see it, in the Other, in the context of scarcity.

The conflicts—or the relationships of antagonism—between man and man are thus given an *economic* explanation in the *Critique*.

We come next to a piece of "dialectic." Antagonism is negative reciprocity; but that negation is itself negated in the collaboration between neighbours which is necessary to overcome scarcity. This is Sartre's "dialectical" theory of the origin of society.

He distinguishes two forms of social structure; which he calls (in the manner of earlier French sociologists) the *series* and the *group*. The two are significantly different. A series is a collection of people who are united only by external proximity. It does not exist as a whole "inside" any of its members. The example Sartre gives of a series is a bus queue. This is a collection or gathering of people that can be observed. You can look at it, count the number of people in it. Every one is there for the "same" purpose; but they do not have a *common* or collective purpose. No one is interested in the others. Indeed, each member of the queue is a rival of the others. Because of the scarcity of seats in the bus, each wishes the others were not there. Each is superfluous, each is one too many. But because everyone *knows* that he is one too many to the others, just as each of the others is one too many to him, all agree to take it in turn to get on the bus when the bus comes. They form an orderly series to avoid a fight or war on the platform of the bus. The forming of an orderly series like a queue is thus a negative reciprocal relationship which is the negation of antagonism; it is the negation of itself.

The people in the bus queue form a plurality of solitude. And Sartre maintains that the whole social life of mankind is permeated by series of this kind. A city is a series of series. The bourgeoisie is a series of series, each member respecting the solitude of the others. But in human society, there is another kind of collection or gathering which Sartre recognises; and this is what he calls the *group*. A group is a collection of people who, unlike those in a series, *do* have a common objective or end. A football team is the example he gives. The difference between a group and a series is inward. From the outside you cannot tell the difference. What makes a group is the fact that each member has committed himself to act as a member of that group. The group is held together, and therefore constituted, by commitment. Each member, as Sartre puts it, has converted his own individual *Praxis* to a common or social *Praxis*. The working class becomes a group when its members commit themselves to socialism. A group can get things done, whereas a series is impotent, since each member pursues only his own Praxis. And indeed it is precisely *because* the series is impotent that the group is constituted in the first place. The origin of the group, Sartre suggests, can be summed up in the discovery that "we must either live by working together, or die by fighting each other."

SCARCITY, AGAIN, IS THE driving force, since it is scarcity, and scarcity alone, which makes men work together for a common end. Scarcity is thus seen as the origin of the group. And in developing this thought, Sartre introduces three colourful notions: the Pledge (*le serment*), Violence, and Terror. Sartre explains that the group comes into being when each individual gives his pledge to become a member of the group, and not to defect from or betray the group. A group

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

is thus defined as a *pledged* group.[6] But the Pledge must be enforced, and the members must be assured that it will be enforced. This is where Violence and Terror come in. It is fear which drives men to form groups in the first place, and it is fear that must keep them in these groups. The fear which keeps men in their groups is Terror. Indeed the Pledge itself, says Sartre, is an invitation for violence to be used against oneself if one breaks one's own word; and the existence of terror is an assurance that violence will be used against any other member of the group who tries to break his pledge.

All groups, says Sartre, are in constant danger of dissolving into seriality. Everyone is conscious of the threat of dispersion in himself and in others. Hence Sartre can say that "Terror is the statutory guarantee, freely called for, that none shall fall back into seriality." Terror indeed is more than this: it is "mortal solicitude," for it is thanks to Terror that man becomes a social being, created such by himself and by others. Terror is the violence that negates violence. Terror in fact is fraternity. For Terror is the guarantee that my neighbour will stay my brother; it binds my neighbour to me by the threat of the violence it will use against him if he dares to be "unbrotherly."

The most important example of a group which Sartre gives is the state. The state, he says, "is a group which reconstitutes itself incessantly, and modifies its composition by a partial renewal—discontinuous or continuous—of its members." Sartre argues that the group in fusion throws up leaders; later the group perpetuates itself by founding institutions. This is the basis of sovereignty. Authority is connected with Terror in the sense that the sovereign is the man who is authorised to exercise Terror. In a serial society, I obey because I have to obey. But in a state I obey myself because it is I, by my pledge, who have merged myself in the group and authorised the sovereign to command. Sartre does not, of course, fancy that every member of a state has actually given his pledge personally; he has been pledged *by proxy*; but the pledge is no less a pledge.

Now, Terror is not only fraternity; it is also liberty. For I freely merge my individual project in the common project when I pledge myself (or am pledged by proxy) to the state; and when the sovereign, fortified by Terror, commands me on behalf of the state, he is giving me back my freedom.

HOWEVER much or little this may be considered a Marxist theory,[7] it is a thoroughly *Sartrian* theory, one which harmonises completely with the theory of human relationships put forward in Sartre's early writings, and summed up by a character in his play *Huis Clos* with the remark "hell is other people." What this remark means is explained in Sartre's principal work on existentialist "ontology" in *L'Etre et le Néant* (1943), where he argued that relations between people are inevitably subject to mutual tensions because each individual, acting towards others as an objectifying "Other," robs others of their liberty. This is what leads Sartre in *L'Etre et le Néant* to say that all relations between men are forms of metaphysical conflict, each individual trying to out-transcend the other, each robbing the other of the other's freedom by objectifying him as a *thing* in the world, and each trying to defend his own freedom from being thus objectified. Sartre's conclusion in *L'Etre et le Néant* is that the only possible relations between people are those which tend towards the sadistic and those which tend towards the masochistic. Togetherness, harmony, love, the *Mitsein* is impossible; all relationships between men are relationships of conflict.

In the *Critique*, Sartre gives a new reason—an economic reason—for this conflict; but the conclusion is the same. He still maintains that each individual is at war with all the others; and though social groups are formed, these groups are held together only by the Pledge and Terror; they are in constant danger of relapsing in the competitive condition of the series.

But the later Sartre has a gospel of salvation which was missing from the earlier writings: the gospel of socialist revolution. The workers of the world could transform themselves into a

[6] A pledged group may have a permanent existence, beyond that of a group in fusion. A group-in-fusion is a group in face of present, material danger. In the pledged group on the other hand, there may be no immediate danger to unite the members. Instead of a real danger, there will need to be a possible danger. Anxiety must take the place of fear. "There is not enough fear to keep the group together now that danger seems remote." So "fear must be re-invented. And this fear as the free product and corrective action of the group against serial dissolution is terror induced by the violence of common freedoms. Terror is the reign in the group of absolute violence on its members." Laing and Cooper, *Reason and Violence*, p. 136.

[7] Raymond Aron, "Sartre's Marxism," ENCOUNTER, June 1965.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pledged group which could conduct a universal struggle against scarcity, and so possibly overcome scarcity: and since man as we know him is a creature shaped by scarcity, such a socialist future would produce a new man. We cannot imagine what a world without scarcity would be like—still less what the new man would be like, for all our thinking is shaped by history, which has hitherto been a history of scarcity. But Sartre's inability to predict the outcome of the revolution does not make him any less impatient to see it set in motion; perhaps, indeed, it makes him *more* impatient. It is only human to be more eager to untie the parcel when one does not know the contents.

SARTRE HAS NEVER SHOWN much liking for the real world. The universe of nature is variously described in his writings as "soft," "sticky," "dull," "tepid," "viscous," "nauseating," and "obscene." Man is equally charmless: he has been corrupted by scarcity into "anti-man." This profound dissatisfaction with the existing world and its inhabitants goes further to explain Sartre's impatience: and this impatience, in turn, helps to explain his partiality for violence.

Marx could say the worker has nothing to lose but his chains: but Sartre knows very well that a worker, like all the rest of us today, has his life to lose, his whole world to lose, if it came to a nuclear war; but Sartre is ready to risk it. And he is all the more ready because to his old impatience, to his old distaste for the real world, there has in recent years been added an element of fear that a new wave of aggressive imperialism might thwart the Revolution.

A Lesson in Love

Sitting straightbacked, a modest Irish miss,
Knees clenched together—even then I knew
Your full mouth would open under my kiss,
The line under your eyes gave me my clue.

Now on the floor, legs thrashing your dress
Over your stocking-tops, your tight blue pants
Bursting to be off at my caress,
This is the underside of our romance.

Which is the truer? I, speaking of Donne,
Calling the act a means and not an end,
Or at your sweet pudenda, sleeking you down:
Was there no other way to be your friend?

None, none. The awkward pauses when we talk,
The literary phrases, are a lie.
It was for this your teacher ran amock:
Truth lies between your legs, and so do I.

Philip Hobsbaum

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Column

THE rejection of Rolf Hochhuth's play, *The Soldiers*, by the board of governors of the National Theatre has revealed a curiously unsatisfactory relationship between the board and its artistic director, Sir Laurence Olivier. It may be, of course, that in such a relationship lack of definition is not necessarily a disadvantage, so long as it works well in practice; but when it ceases to do so, as it seems to have done in this case, it is perhaps time to ask for some clearer statement of the rights and duties of the board, and of the principles which govern, or should govern, its relations with the artistic director.

Unfortunately, as is common in such controversies, the issue of principle has been confused and overlaid by a number of different and entirely separate issues, of which the most important is whether, as a matter of historical fact, Sir Winston Churchill assassinated General Sikorski, his friend and ally, head of the Polish government in exile, and commander-in-chief of the Polish armed forces. It seems an unlikely issue to disturb the peace and progress of the National Theatre; one might be excused for thinking that it has only been possible for it to do so because the board has both misinterpreted its own functions and the nature of the relationship between the drama and historical truth.

This is not, however, because Lord Chandos and his board have shown themselves to be bad historians. So far as the available evidence goes, they are undoubtedly right in thinking that the charge of assassination brought against Churchill is a gross slander on the reputation of a great statesman, only recently dead and almost universally revered as, in A. J. P. Taylor's words, "the saviour of his country." Yet the origins of the charge, and the degree of credibility which others have attached to it, are worth examining because they throw a sharp light on the kind of material Hochhuth has exploited in his play and the use which a dramatist may make of history in order to achieve the effect which he aims at.

GENERAL SIKORSKI DIED on 5 July 1943 in an aeroplane crash off Gibraltar, in which his daughter, two members of Parliament, and all the crew except the pilot were also killed. On the next day, 6 July, Dr. Goebbels' *Völkische Beobachter* appeared with the headline: "THE LAST VICTIM OF KATYN. SIKORSKI MURDERED BY LONDON." The alleged reason for the murder was Sikorski's insistence on the dispatch of a Red Cross mission to enquire into the mass murder by the Russians of 300 Polish officers whose bodies had been discovered in the forest of Katyn three months before the crash, and the obstacle this placed in the way of Churchill's good relations with Stalin. Thus Dr. Goebbels was first off the mark with his version of Sikorski's death, which was assiduously propagated by the German press and radio in the following months. Rolf Hochhuth is too young to have listened to this propaganda, except as a child; but could some reflection of it have unconsciously coloured his mind in his approach to the subject of his play?

The British government immediately held an inquiry into the crash in Gibraltar; a second inquiry was held in England a month later and reported that the accident had been due to the jamming of the aircraft's air elevators, that sabotage or foul play could be ruled out, and that no blame attached to the Czech pilot, Captain Prchal, who had been exhaustively interrogated. The report, however, did not satisfy the Polish government-in-exile, which instituted its own inquiry. It came to the conclusion that the evidence was not sufficient to exclude the possibility of sabotage, especially in view of the inadequate security precautions at the Gibraltar airstrip; after the war General Lahousen, head of the sabotage branch of the *Abwehr*, is said to have claimed that these had permitted one of his men to put sugar in the petrol tank of the aircraft; but this conflicts with all the expert evidence presented to the commission of inquiry.

In 1944, Dr. Goebbels was joined by a distinguished ally in his campaign to convict Churchill of the murder of Sikorski. In his *Conversations with Stalin*, Milovan Djilas records that Stalin described Churchill to him as "the kind of man who will pick your pocket of a kopek if you don't watch him" and warned him to take the greatest precautions for Tito's safety, because it was the British Intelligence who had killed Sikorski.

Thus both Goebbels and Stalin subscribed to the legend of Churchill's guilt, whether they believed it or not. It did not die after the war. When the war ended Captain Prchal returned to Prague, where he worked at the airport. After the communist *coup d'état* of 1948 he was interrogated by an agent of the security police, a Dr. Brom, who wished to obtain a statement by him that Sikorski had been killed by the British Intelligence services; Prchal stole

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a plane and escaped to England, and now lives in California where he has recently confirmed the evidence he originally gave to the British commission of inquiry, and has threatened to sue for libel if it is implied that he was an accomplice in a plot to assassinate Sikorski.

But the death of Sikorski, assuming that he was murdered, could also be used to incriminate others besides Churchill. The communist authorities in Warsaw used it first to inculpate Polish anti-communists who were accused of being in league with the Nazis; at the show trial in 1949 of Adam Doboszynski (who was represented as having been first a German and later an American spy) he was accused of carrying out orders of the German Intelligence in Lisbon connected with the death of Sikorski. Later, however, Churchill was unmasked as the criminal in Poland also; in a book published in Poland two years ago, Jerzy Klimkovski, once an officer on General Anders' staff, accused Churchill of the murder because Sikorski wished to come to an agreement with Stalin, while Churchill wished to prevent it. The book was borrowed by Hochhuth from the Sikorski Institute in London and appears to have been used by him as a source.

Thus Dr. Goebbels and Stalin, the *Abwehr*, Czech and Polish communists, have each from time to time claimed that Sikorski was murdered, and the credit or the guilt has been attributed in turn, as need arises, to British Intelligence, German Intelligence, and anti-communist Poles, and for motives which involve Sikorski in being at one moment anti-Russian and at another pro-Russian. But in addition to the available sources, Hochhuth also claims to have additional evidence, some originating from a living person whose name cannot be revealed, which has been deposited in a Swiss bank and will not be made public for fifty years, and he professes to have derived information relating to the murder, though no one else has been able to do so, from a study of correspondence between "Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt, Attlee and Truman." Nor is he alone in the conclusions he has reached. He has been assisted in his researches, and confirmed in his belief in Churchill's guilt, by Mr. David Irving, author of *The Destruction of Dresden*, a book which has had considerable influence both in this country and abroad, and helped to inspire Hochhuth's original conception of his play. Mr. Irving claims to have collected much additional evidence relating to the death of Sikorski, which will be embodied in a book, to be published in the autumn, which attributes responsibility for it to the British.

Until we have seen Mr. Irving's book, or unless we live long enough to examine the archives deposited in Switzerland, it is of course impossible to state with absolute certainty that there is no reliable evidence indicating British complicity, of any kind, in Sikorski's death. What one can say with certainty is that none of the evidence hitherto available makes a charge of complicity either convincing or even credible. The sources are, to say the least of it, highly suspect; the evidence offered is weak and frail as compared with the facts presented by the report of the British commission of inquiry; the political motivation offered for the crime is both confused and hardly sufficient to recommend assassination even to persons more personally bloodthirsty than Churchill.

YET, EVEN SO, IS NOT the legend, so widely spread and so widely believed, of the murder of Sikorski sufficient to justify a dramatist in forming a hypothesis which may help him to display on the stage a view of contemporary history which may go beyond anything we can learn from established fact? And if, in fact, this is what Hochhuth has done, and if *The Soldiers* is aesthetically satisfying, as Sir Laurence Olivier believes, is there any reason why it should not be presented on the stage of the National Theatre, in spite of the shock it may administer to those to whom Churchill's reputation is something sacrosanct? Surely a play should not be banned, or rejected, simply on the grounds of *lèse*-Churchill. One might even argue that the shock might play a vital part in creating the atmosphere the dramatist required in order to present his case. A dramatist does not deal in the same kind of truth as an historian. He is concerned with its possibilities as much as, or more than, with its probabilities or its certainties. Unlike the historian, what he looks for in history is the raw material, whether of fact or of legend or even of mere unrealised potentialities, out of which he can fashion an action which on the stage will carry its own conviction.

But such questions cannot be argued in the abstract; in such matters the play really is the thing. If one wanted a kind of textbook exposition of how the dramatist really does, or may, look at history, one could not do better than look at Günter Grass' play, *Die Plebejer proben den Aufstand*, recently translated into English, with a preface by the author. Both the play and the preface are an inquiry into the problem of what rights the dramatist can exercise over history, as exemplified in the successive misinterpretations and distortions imposed upon the historical figure of Coriolanus by Shakespeare, by Bertolt Brecht, in his own adaptation of Shakespeare's play, and by Günter Grass himself, through the voices of a party of construction

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

workers involved in the rising of 17 June 1953, in East Berlin.

Unfortunately, we are not to see how *The Soldiers* would fit into such a discussion; or at least not on the stage of the National Theatre. But if, as has been reported, an effort is to be made by Sir Laurence Olivier and Mr. Kenneth Tynan to find another theatre for it, it will be interesting to see whether the same kind of reasons which have persuaded the governors of the National Theatre to reject it will also carry weight with the Lord Chamberlain.

For otherwise it would appear to be the case that the National Theatre, simply because it is a *national* theatre, subsidised by the state, is to be cabined, cribbed and confined by restrictions, over and above those already imposed by the Lord Chamberlain, from which other theatres are free; that is to say, that Sir Laurence Olivier, in selecting his repertoire, must have eye not only to the limitations imposed on his freedom of choice by the laws of libel and the powers of censorship entrusted to the Lord Chamberlain, but to such considerations of national policy, national prestige, and national morality as happen to appeal to Lord Chandos, Sir Kenneth Clark, Mr. Victor Mishcon, and other official representatives of the British artistic establishment. One can think of no more humiliating condition to impose on the artistic director of a great national institution, who also happens to be a man of genius.

SUCH A SITUATION, of course, would have no practical importance, as far as the development of the National Theatre is concerned, if Lord Chandos and his colleagues had a certain sense of humility in discharging the function entrusted to them, which in general would appear to be that of ensuring that the taxpayers' money is well spent in carrying out the National Theatre's declared policy of presenting productions of the best plays of all ages, including our own. This is a function which could only properly be discharged by exercising the broadest and most general supervision of the National Theatre's activities, except in so far as finance and administration are concerned. There appears to be nothing in the charter of the governors which justifies them in interfering with the artistic director's choice of any particular play or implies that, in matters of politics, sex, morality or the national interest, they have access to some superior form of wisdom and insight which is not available to the artistic director.

Unfortunately, this is not at all how Lord Chandos and his colleagues seem to interpret their functions or their powers. Lord Chandos seems to take it for granted that there are certain spheres in which the judgment of himself and his colleagues is necessarily superior to that of the artistic director. There are, in the first place, according to an interview in the *Sunday Times*, those "wider considerations," which enable one to determine whether political satire is legitimate or not; they appear to depend on whether it is obviously intended to win votes for one or other of the two political parties, and this simple issue is, it would appear, far too difficult for a mere artistic director to decide. There is, secondly, the need "to remember foreigners, the sort who think that the *Times* newspaper is compiled by the government (they really do, you know)"; one has to bear in mind "some poor Italian gentleman" who might be misled about the quality of life in England by the plays presented at the National Theatre. I am not quite sure of the point of this argument; whether it is that the *Times* does suppress or distort the facts of life in England for fear of misleading "some poor Italian gentleman," and so does the National Theatre; or whether it is that, if they do not, they both should. And there is also, it would appear, the further consideration that "we must keep some control of liberty." There may, no doubt, be some truth in this as a general proposition; one cannot help feeling that it is somewhat unfortunate as a formula for regulating the relations between the board of the National Theatre and its artistic director.

Moreover, the chairman of the board appears to be engaged in a struggle to sustain the principle of democracy in the National Theatre, brandishing the torch of liberty against the authoritarianism of the artistic director. To give Sir Laurence complete freedom of discretion in the choice of plays would, it seems, be "undemocratic." Because the opinions of the board are more numerous than those of Sir Laurence and Mr. Tynan it is perfectly right, it would seem, that, if there is disagreement, they should count for more, all the more so because the board presents "a pretty good cross-section of public opinion—a leading artist, a leading critic, a leading impresario and two Labour chaps." This must be one of the most idiosyncratic cross-sections of public opinion ever cut; but even if it were not, it would in no way strengthen Lord Chandos' argument for importing the principles of political democracy into an institution devoted to the production of works of art. But Lord Chandos' view of democracy seems in any case somewhat confused: "Democracy's reached such a pitch that any majority is always assumed to be wrong...."

Lord Chandos' defence of the board's decision does not give a very reassuring picture of its relations with the artistic director; unfortunately, the views of some of his colleagues seem

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to be no better. *The Soldiers* is not the only example of a play rejected by the board. Another is Frank Wedekind's *Spring's Awakening*, one scene of which was apparently judged "too sexy" for the British public. It is, of course, true that Wedekind's play created something of a scandal in the Germany of the 1890s; but it seems curious that a play which was tolerated by the Hohenzollern empire should go too far for the governors of a British national theatre in the 1960s.

A different example of a rejected play is Charles Wood's *Dingo*, recently performed at the Bristol Arts Theatre but originally commissioned for the National Theatre. In this case, the objections were those not of the board but of the Lord Chamberlain; the play's thesis, according to Ronald Bryden in the *Observer*, under the headline "AN ENGLISH HOCHHUTH," is that "Churchill was responsible . . . for all the victims of Alamein, an unnecessary battle fought to impress the Americans and bolster home morale."

CHURCHILL REALLY SEEMS to cross Sir Laurence Olivier's path at every turn, as if the cause of artistic freedom in the theatre had become a personal struggle between the ghost of the dead statesman and the living actor. But it really does appear that, between the Lord Chamberlain and the board of governors, there are very serious restrictions on Sir Laurence's freedom of action in the theatre which he directs. He must be circumspect in dealing with the idols of the marketplace, with sex, with politics, and who knows what else might damage the image of Britain in the eyes of "some poor Italian gentleman," worrying about her decline as he eats his pasta; according to Mr. Victor Mishcon, one of the "Labour chaps" on the board, he ought to be wary about staging a play "which made an absolute mockery of the New Testament."

Poor Sir Laurence! Sex, politics, religion, all these and Churchill too are subjects about which he must be wary not to offend; and this is what Lord Chandos seems to mean when he says that the board "should give the artistic director the greatest independence possible—and I repeat *possible*—in a modern society." One sees why Lord Chandos repeats *possible*; he means as opposed to actual. The only sensible comment I have seen by a member of the board on its relations with its artistic director has been by Mr. Willatt, a solicitor: "The problem has not been solved." It certainly has not, and those responsible for the well-being of the National Theatre should take another look at it.

*

I AM SURE that other readers of ENCOUNTER will feel the same sense of loss as myself, on the death of one of its most distinguished contributors, J. R. Ackerley. Measured in bulk, his literary production was small; a play, *The Prisoners of War*; *Hindoo Holiday*, an account of his experiences as tutor and secretary to the son of an Indian Maharajah, which is a small masterpiece; *My Dog Tulip*, which was first published in ENCOUNTER; and finally his last and best book, *We Think the World of You*, of which Stuart Hampshire, reviewing it in ENCOUNTER, wrote: "It remains to be enjoyed, and will be enjoyed, wherever style, as exactness and a just sense of form in telling a story, is looked for in a novel."

But though he wrote little, everything he wrote was of the highest quality. One reason why he did not write more was that for 24 years he devoted to his work as literary editor of *The Listener* the same scrupulous sense of values, the quickness and sensitiveness of feeling, the search for what is genuine, original and spontaneous, which he showed in his own writing. I am one of innumerable others who benefited by the immense kindness and understanding, combined with a certain rather awful severity, which he devoted to his work as an editor; he made one wish to do the best one was possibly capable of for him.

As a human being, he showed the same qualities as he did as a writer. He was all of one piece, and it was a very remarkable piece. He had an integrity which was absolute and uncompromising; a kind of wry and humorous melancholy which only enhanced his natural distinction, his beautiful manners, his wisdom in all personal relations; he had a power of giving and inspiring a depth and loyalty of affection, both in human beings and in dogs, of which few people are capable; one sometimes wondered in which light he regarded oneself. To all those who enjoyed the privilege of his friendship, his absence will make a gap in their lives as of something irreplaceable.

R

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Critic as Artist as Wilde

By Richard Ellmann

WILDE IS THE ONE WRITER of the Nineties whom everyone still reads, or more precisely, has read. The mixture of frivolity and pathos in his career continues to arrest us. That career displays its self-conjugation in Wilde's own terms of "The Critic as Artist."

In 1914 Henry James could complain that there was not enough criticism about to give novelists their bearings, while T. S. Eliot and Saul Bellow have recently regretted, for different reasons and in different tones of voice, that there is now too much. The obtrusive place of the critic today can be related to a methodological emphasis which is conspicuous in other disciplines as well. But Wilde was one of the first to see that the exaltation of the artist required a concomitant exaltation of the critic. If art was to have a special train, the critic must keep some seats reserved on it.

Wilde reached this conclusion by way of two others. The first is that criticism plays a vital role in the creative process. If this sounds like T. S. Eliot admonishing Matthew Arnold, Wilde had expressed it, also as an admonition to Arnold, almost thirty years before. The second is that criticism is an independent branch of literature with its own procedures. "I am always amused," says Wilde, "by the silly vanity of those writers and artists of our day who seem to imagine that the primary function of the critic is to chatter about their second-rate work." And he complains that "The poor reviewers are apparently reduced to be the reporters of the police-court of literature, the chroniclers of the doings of the habitual criminals of art." In protesting the independence of criticism Wilde sounds like an ancestral Northrop Frye or Roland Barthes. These portentous comparisons do indeed claim virtue by association, and such claims may be broadened. André Gide found Nietzsche less exciting because he had read Wilde, and Thomas Mann in one of his last essays remarks almost with chagrin on how many of Nietzsche's aphorisms might have been expressed by Wilde, and how many of Wilde's by Nietzsche. What I think can be urged for Wilde then, is that for his own reasons and in his own way he laid the basis for many critical positions which are still debated in much the same terms, and which we like to attribute to more ponderous names.

When Wilde formulated his theories the public was more hostile to criticism than it is now, and Wilde was flaunting his iconoclasm, his contempt for the unconsidered and so uncritical pieties of his age. This in fact was his mode: not to speak for the Victorians, or for the prematurely old writers who dithered that they were the end of an era, as if they must expire with the 1800s. Wilde proposed to speak for the young, with even excessive eagerness. His own age was always a little embarrassing for him, because he had already completed a degree at Trinity College, Dublin, when he went up to Oxford. He was not above a little deception on this score. In 1877, when he was twenty-three, he sent a poem to Gladstone with a letter saying, "I am little more than a boy." And in a poem written that year he spoke of his "boyish passion" and described himself as "one who scarce has seen some twenty summers." This line, in turn, he repeated in his poem "The Sphinx," finished when he was forty. Even in court he injudiciously testified he was two years younger than he was, so that he sounds a little like Falstaff shouting to Bardolph during the robbery, "They hate us youth." Wilde's mode was calculated juvenescence, and the characters in his books are

RICHARD ELLMANN *is Professor of English at Northwestern University, and the author of* The Identity of Yeats *(1954), and a biography of* James Joyce *(1959). His contributions to* ENCOUNTER *include "Yeats & Eliot" (July 1965) and "Palinurus at Sixty" (February 1964).*

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

always being warned by shrewder characters of the danger of listening to people older than themselves. To help reduce that danger, Wilde's characters are invariably parentless. The closest kin allowed is an aunt.

LIKE STENDHAL, Wilde thought of himself as a voice of the age to be, rather than of the one that was fading. Yet like anyone else writing criticism in the later 19th century, he had to come to terms with the age that had been, and especially with everybody's parent, Matthew Arnold. Wilde sought Arnold's approbation for his first book, *Poems,* in 1881, which he sent with a letter stressing their shared Oxonian connections. These extended, though he wisely did not enforce the claim, to their both having won the Newdigate. Actually their prize-winning poems offer a contrast of manners, Arnold's being just as determined to appear older as Wilde's younger than his years. Arnold replied politely.

But by 1881 Arnold was genuinely old, and seven years later, in 1888, he was dead. Wilde's only book of criticism, *Intentions,* was written during the three years following Arnold's death and published in 1891, as if to take over that critical burden and express what Arnold had failed to say. Yeats thought the book "wonderful" and Walter Pater handsomely praised it for carrying on, "more perhaps than any other writer, the brilliant critical work of Matthew Arnold." Pater's encomium is a reminder, however, not to ignore *him*. There are not two but three critical phases in the late 19th century, with Pater transitional between Arnold and Wilde.

In 1864, lecturing from the Oxford Chair of Poetry on "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Arnold declared—to everyone's lasting memory—that the "aim of criticism is to see the object as in itself it really is." This statement went with his demand for "disinterested curiosity" as the mark of the critic; its inadvertent effect was to put the critic on his knees before the work he was discussing. Not everyone enjoyed this position. Nine years later Walter Pater wrote his preface to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. Pretending to agree with Arnold's definition of the aim of criticism, he quoted it, then added, "the first step towards seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly." But Pater's corollary subtly altered the original proposition; it shifted the centre of attention from the rock of the object to the winds of the perceiver's sensations. It made the critic's own work more important as well as more subjective. If observation is still the word, the critic looks within himself as often as out upon the object.

Wilde had been Pater's student, and in *Intentions* eighteen years later he tweaks Arnold's nose with the essay which in its first published form was entitled, "The True Function and Value of Criticism: with Some Remarks on the Importance of Doing Nothing." Here Wilde rounded on Arnold by asserting that the aim of criticism is to see the object as it really is not. This aim might seem to justify the rhapsodical criticism of Ruskin and Pater, and Wilde uses them as examples; his contention goes beyond their practice, however; he wishes to free critics from subordination, to grant them a larger share in the production of literature. While he does not forbid them to explain a book, they might prefer, he said, to deepen a book's mystery. (This purpose is amusing but out of date now; who could deepen the mystery of *Finnegans Wake*?) At any rate, their context would be different from that of the creative artist. For just as the artist claimed independence of received experience (Picasso tells us that art is "what nature is not"), so the critic claimed independence of received books. "The highest criticism," according to Wilde, "is the record of one's own soul." More closely he explained that the critic must have all literature in his mind and see particular works in that perspective rather than in isolation. Thus he, and we as well,

> shall be able to realise, not merely our own lives, but the collective spirit of the race, and so to make ourselves absolutely modern, in the true meaning of the word modernity. For he to whom the present is the only thing that is present, knows nothing of the age in which he lives. To realise the nineteenth century, one must realise every century that has preceded it and that has contributed to its making.

Through knowledge the critic might become more creative than the creative artist, a paradox which has been expressed with more solemnity by Norman Podhoretz about literature of the present day.

Wilde reached these formulations of his aesthetic ideas late in his short life. They were latent, however, in his earliest known essay, "The Rise of Historical Criticism," which he wrote as a university exercise. While praising historians for their scrupulousness, Wilde finds the core of history to be the wish not merely to paint a picture, but to investigate laws and tendencies. He celebrates those historians who impose dominion upon fact instead of surrendering to it. Later he was to say much more boldly, "The one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it." It is part of his larger conception

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that the one duty (or better, whim) we owe nature, reality, or the world, is to reconstruct it.

WHEN WILDE turned to literary as distinguished from historical criticism, he at first was content to follow Pater. Wilde was won by Pater's espousal of gemlike flames and of high temperatures both in words and in life. Next to him Arnold sounded chilly, never so Victorian as when he was cogently criticising Victorianism. That word "impression," with which Pater sought to unlock everything, became a favourite word in both Wilde and later in Arthur Symons, and was only arrested by Yeats in the late 1890s because he could not bear so much impermanence and insisted on a metaphysical basis—the *Anima Mundi*—for transitory moods. Like the word "absurd" today, though without a systematic philosophy behind it, the word "impression" agitated against pat assumptions and preconceptions.

Pater's vocabulary shapes the initial poem of Wilde's book of verse, published when he was twenty-five. This poem "Hélas!" encapsulates much of Wilde's temperament, but with Pater's colouring:

To drift with every passion till my soul
Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,
Is it for this that I have given away
Mine ancient wisdom, and austere control?
Methinks my life is a twice-written scroll
Scrawled over on some boyish holiday
With idle songs for pipe and virelay
Which do but mar the secret of the whole.
Surely there was a time I might have trod
The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God:
Is that time dead? lo! with a little rod
I did but touch the honey of romance—
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

To call the poem "Hélas!", to sigh in a foreign language, alerts us that the confession to follow will luxuriate in its penitence. The Biblical archaisms which occur later offer compunction suitably perfumed. "To drift" may well put us off as weak; on the other hand, "to drift with every passion" is not so bad. As its image of passivity, the poem offers "a stringed lute on which all winds can play." For the romantics the Aeolian harp was a favourable image because it harmonised man and nature. Here the winds are winds of temptation, rather than gusts of Lake Country air. The rhetorical question which begins, "Is it for this?" sounds reproachful enough, yet the phrases "ancient wisdom" and "austere control"—self-congratulatory since Wilde never had either—are so vague as to constitute a stately but equally unenergetic alternative to drifting.

THE WORD "DRIFT" comes down from Oxford in the 1870s. It occupies a prominent position in Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance,* and specifically in the notorious conclusion to that book. This "Conclusion" was included in the edition of 1873, but omitted in 1877, when Wilde was Pater's student, on the ground that it "might possibly mislead" the young, who accordingly thronged to be misled by the first edition. It was the boldest thing Pater ever wrote; he drew upon the scientific work of his day to deny the integrity of objects. Physical life is now recognised, he says, to be a concurrence of forces rather than a group of things; the mind has no fixities either. He hits upon a metaphor of liquidity such as William James and Bergson were to adopt a little later in characterising consciousness as a river or stream; Pater says more balefully that consciousness is a whirlpool, an image which later both Yeats and Pound relished. In our physical life, Pater grants, we sometimes feel momentarily at rest; in our consciousness, however, altering the whirlpool image, he finds "nothing but the race of the mid-stream, a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought." To drift is not so wanton, then, as inevitable. To guide our drifting we should rely not on sights or thoughts, in Pater's view, but on "great passions." "Only be sure it is passion," he puts in as a caveat. He urges his readers to recognise that "not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the goal." "Our one hope lies in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time." This attempt to render experience in terms of quantitatively measurable pulsations sounds a little like *Principles of Literary Criticism,* but Pater's tone is not like Richards'; he plays on the flute for the young to follow him.

When Pater at last decided to reprint this "Conclusion" (in 1888), he toned it down a little. In *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), also later, the word "drift" is again prominent, but this time is pejorative instead of merely descriptive. To suit his later and more decorous manner Pater, in reviewing *Dorian Gray,* complained of the book's "dainty Epicurean theory" because, he said:

> A true Epicureanism aims at a complete though harmonious development of man's entire organism. To lose the moral sense therefore, for instance, the sense of sin and righteousness . . . is to lose, or lower, organisation, to become less complex, to pass from a higher to a lower degree of development.

The letting-go, as well as the drawing-back, of Pater are both evident in Wilde; his work celebrates both impulses, balancing or disporting

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with them. In a letter of March 1877, written four years before "Hélas!", he informs an Oxford friend:

> I have got rather keen on Masonry lately and believe in it awfully—in fact would be awfully sorry to have to give it up in case I secede from the *Protestant Heresy*. I *now* breakfast with Father Parkinson, go to St Aloysius, talk sentimental religion to Dunlop and altogether am caught in the fowler's snare, in the wiles of the Scarlet Woman—I may go over in the vac. I have dreams of a visit to Newman, of the holy sacrament in a new Church, and of a quiet and peace afterwards in my soul. I need not say, though, that I shift with every breath of thought and am weaker and more self-deceiving than ever.
>
> If I *could hope* that the Church would wake in me some earnestness and purity I would go over *as a luxury*, if for no better reasons. But I can hardly hope it would, and to go over to Rome would be to sacrifice and give up my two great gods "Money and Ambition."

In this letter Wilde testifies playfully to the same yearning to be earnest that he shows in "Hélas!" and then mocks in his later comedy. He is half-converted to Catholicism, half to Masonry—that these two groups cannot bear each other does not prevent their being equally attractive to him; they have parity as new areas of sensation, to be enjoyed wilfully and passingly. If, as Wilde announced later, "the best way to resist temptation is to yield to it," the reason is that having done so, one may pass on to the next and the next, and in this concourse one may keep a residual freedom by not lingering with any single temptation long.

DURING THE FOUR YEARS between writing this letter and writing "Hélas!", Wilde had put aside both Catholicism and Masonry. In his sonnet he has in mind chiefly his formal education as contrasted with his romantic self-indulgence. A classicist by training, Wilde considered Hellenism to be the more basic side of his nature, overlaid, but only as a palimpsest conceals the original, by a more modern mode. He berates himself, gently. His new life is made up of "idle songs for pipe and virelay," a self-accusation which only concedes frivolity, not depravity. Moreover, it is artistic frivolity, a further mitigation. Wilde remembered Pater's comment in the same "Conclusion" that "the wisest" instead of living spend their lives in "art and song." If it is wrong to drift, and Wilde hedges a little, then it is less wrong to drift gracefully. A "boyish holiday" is also not the most offensive way to spend one's time, especially if one likes boys.

The sextet of the poem restates the issue, with new dashes of metaphor. The poet then asks histrionically, "Is that time dead?" He won't say for sure, but again he sweetens his offence: he has but touched with Jonathan's rod the honey of romance. The last question is not so much despairing as hopeful. Wilde felt he was superior to both classical and romantic modes, because he could manipulate both: he said in his essay on the English renaissance that this variability was the strength of the new movement in letters to which he belonged. He thought he had physiological as well as artistic support for his method, because "the desire of any very intensified emotion [is] to be relieved by some emotion that is its opposite." He shifts therefore from foot to foot in other poems besides "Hélas!" "The Sphinx" begins with a fascinated invocation of the sphinx and ends with a strident rejection of her. Wilde summarises his state or rather his flow of mind in a letter:

> Sometime you will find, even as I have found, that there is no such thing as a romantic experience; there are romantic memories, and there is the desire of romance—that is all. Our most fiery moments of ecstasy are merely shadows of what somewhere else we have felt, or of what we long some day to feel. So at least it seems to me. And, strangely enough, what comes of all this is a curious mixture of ardour and of indifference. I myself would sacrifice everything for a new experience, and I know there is no such thing as a new experience at all. I think I would more readily die for what I do not believe in than for what I hold to be true. I would go to the stake for a sensation and be a sceptic to the last! Only one thing remains infinitely fascinating to me, the mystery of moods. To be master of these moods is exquisite, to be mastered by them more exquisite still. Sometimes I think that the artistic life is a long and lovely suicide, and am not sorry that it is so.

Life then is a willed deliquescence, or more exactly, a progressive surrender of the self to all the temptations appropriate to it.

WHAT WILDE needed was not to avoid the precious occasions of evil in "Hélas!" but to approach more enterprising ones. Yet after his *Poems* appeared in 1881 he was at check for almost six years. He kept busy; he went on a lecture tour for a whole year to America; he returned to England and went lecturing on; he tried unsuccessfully for a post as school inspector such as Matthew Arnold had; erratically still, he married in 1884 and took up husbanding, begetting two children born in 1885 and 1886. Then in 1887 Wilde began the publications by which he is known. He wrote a volume of stories, and one of fairy

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tales, then one of criticism, then five plays, besides editing from 1887 to 1889 a magazine, *Woman's World*—a patrician equivalent of the A & P *Woman's Day*. It would seem that something roused him from the pseudo-consolidation of marriage and lectures, which were dilettantism for him, to genuine consolidation which seemed dilettantism to others.

This something appears in the original version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* published in *Lippincott's Magazine*. Wilde emphasises more there than in the final version the murder of the painter Basil Hallward by Dorian; it is the turning-point in Dorian's experience, a plunge from insinuations of criminal tendency to crime itself. The murder at once protects the secret of his double life and vents his revulsion against the man who wants him innocent still. In *Lippincott's* Wilde specifies: "It was on the 7th of November, the eve of his own thirty-second birthday, as he often remembered afterwards...." Then when the novel was published as a book, Wilde altered this date: "It was on the ninth of November, the eve of his own thirty-eighth birthday, as he often remembered afterwards."

Altering Dorian's age would be gratuitous if Wilde had not attached significance to his own thirty-second year which began in 1886. The passage must have been autobiographical, and such a conjecture receives support from Robert Ross, who boasted that it was he, at the age of 17, who in 1886 first seduced Wilde to homosexual practices. Wilde evidently considered this sudden alteration of his life a pivotal matter, to be recast as Dorian's murder of Hallward. He himself moved from pasteboard marriage to the expression of long latent proclivities, at some remove from the "ancient wisdom" and "austere control" to which he had earlier laid claim as his basic nature. Respectability, always an enemy, was destroyed in his own house. The first work which came out of the new Wilde was, appropriately, "Lord Arthur Savile's Crime," in which murder is comically enacted and successfully concealed.

From late in the year 1886 then, Wilde was able to think of himself, if he wanted to, as criminal. Up to that time he could always consider himself an innocent misunderstood; now he lived in such a way as to confirm suspicions. Instead of challenging Victorian society only by words, he acted in such a way as to create scandal. Indiscreet by nature, he was indiscreet also by conviction, and he waged his war somewhat openly. He sensed that his new life was a source of literary effect. As he wrote later of Thomas Wainewright: "His crimes seem to have had an important effect upon his art. They gave a strong personality to his style, a quality that his early work certainly lacked." He returned to this idea: "One can fancy an intense personality being created out of sin," and in "The Soul of Man Under Socialism," he thought that "Crime... under certain conditions, may be said to have created individualism." In "The Portrait of Mr. W. H." (1889), he made Shakespeare's sonnets depend upon a similarly forbidden love affair, with an actor the same age as Ross. Thomas Mann's Mario Kröger speaks of a banker who discovers his literary talent by committing a serious crime for which he is put in prison. The artist-criminal is implicit in romantic and symbolistic theories of art, but Wilde anticipates the explicitness on this subject of both Mann and Gide, as he does that of Auden in *About the House*:

> *Time has taught you*
> *how much inspiration*
> *your vices brought you....*

Wilde might have discounted the sinfulness of his conduct, and applied to himself his own epigram: "Wickedness is a myth invented by good people to account for the curious attractiveness of others." But he was quite content to think of himself as sinful.

He now succeeded in relating his new discoveries about himself to aesthetic theory. His only formal book of criticism, *Intentions,* has the same secret spring as his later plays and stories. Ostensibly he generally says that the spheres of art and of ethics are absolutely distinct and separate. But occasionally, overtly or covertly, he states that for the artist crime does pay, by instilling itself in his content and affecting his form. Each of the four essays that make up *Intentions* is to some degree subversive, as if to demonstrate that the intentions of the artist are not strictly honourable. The first and the last, "The Decay of Lying" and "The Truth of Masks," celebrate art for rejecting truths, faces, and all that paraphernalia in favour of lies and masks. Wilde doesn't do this in the romantic way of extolling the imagination, for while he uses that word he is a little chary of it; the imagination is itself too natural, too involuntary, for his view of art. He prefers lying because it sounds more wilful, because it is no outpouring of the self, but a conscious effort to mislead. "All fine imaginative work," Wilde affirms, "is self-conscious and deliberate. A great poet sings because he chooses to sing." On the other hand, "if one tells the truth, one is sure, sooner or later, to be found out!" "All bad poetry springs from genuine feeling." Wilde celebrates art not in the name of Ariel, as the romantics would, but in the name of Ananias.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He finds art to have two basic energies, both of them subversive. One asserts its magnificent isolation from experience, its unreality, its sterility. He would concur with Nabokov that art is a kind of trick played on nature, an *illicit* creation by man. "All art is entirely useless," Wilde declares. "Art never expresses anything but itself." "Nothing that actually occurs is of the smallest importance." Form determines content, not content form, a point which Auden also sometimes affirms and which is often assumed by symbolists. With this theory Wilde turns Taine upon his head; the age does not determine what its art should be, rather it is art which gives the age its character. So far from responding to questions posed by the epoch, art offers answers before questions have been asked. "It is the ages that are her symbols." Life, straggling after art, seizes upon forms in art to express itself, so that life imitates art rather than art life. ". . . This unfortunate aphorism about Art holding the mirror up to Nature, is," according to Wilde, "deliberately said by Hamlet in order to convince the bystanders of his absolute insanity in all art-matters." If art be a mirror, we look into it to see—a mask. But more precisely, art is no mirror; it is a "mist of words," "a veil."

Sometimes the veil is pierced. This indifferent conferral of forms upon life by art may have unexpected consequences which implicate art instead of isolating it. In "The Decay of Lying" Wilde speaks of "silly boys who, after reading the adventures of Jack Sheppard or Dick Turpin, pillage the stalls of unfortunate applewomen, break into sweetshops at night, and alarm old gentlemen who are returning home from the city by leaping out on them in suburban lanes, with black masks and unloaded revolvers." In *Dorian Gray* the effect is more sinister; Dorian declares he has been poisoned by a book, and while Lord Henry assures him that art is too aloof to influence anybody, Dorian is felt to be right. Art may then transmit criminal impulses to its audience. Like Whitman, Wilde could and did say, "Nor will my poems do good only, they will do just as much evil, perhaps more."

THE ARTIST may be criminal and instil his work with criminality. Wilde's second essay in *Intentions* is "Pen, Pencil and Poison." He uses Thomas Wainewright as the type of the artist. We need not expect to find a beautiful soul; Wainewright was instead "a forger of no mean or ordinary capabilities, and . . . a subtle and secret poisoner almost without rival in this or any age." Among his interesting tastes, Wainewright had "that curious love of green, which in individuals is always the sign of a subtle artistic temperament, and in nations is said to denote a laxity, if not a decadence of morals." When a friend reproached him with a murder, he shrugged his shoulders and gave an answer that Susan Sontag would call camp: "Yes; it was a dreadful thing to do, but she had very thick ankles." Wilde concludes that "the fact of a man being a poisoner is nothing against his prose," and "there is no essential incongruity between crime and culture." Wainewright's criminal career turns out to be strictly relevant to his art, fortifying it and giving it character. The quality of that art it is too early to judge, Wilde says, but he clearly believes that Wainewright's personality achieves sufficient criminality to have great artistic promise.

"The Critic as Artist" is the most ambitious of the essays in *Intentions*. It too conveys the notion that art undermines things as they are. The critic is the artist's accomplice in crime, or even masterminds the plot in which they are mutually engaged. Criticism overcomes the tendency of creation to repeat itself; it helps the artist discover unused possibilities. For at bottom, Wilde says, criticism is self-consciousness; it enables us to put our most recent phase at a distance and so go on to another. It disengages us so we may re-engage ourselves in a new way.

From this argument Wilde proceeds to find criticism and self-consciousness to be as necessary as sin. "What is termed Sin is an essential element of progress"; without it, he holds, the world would stagnate or grow old or become colourless.

> By its curiosity [there is Arnold's word with Wilde's meaning] Sin increases the experience of the race. Through its intensified assertion of individualism it saves us from monotony of type. In its rejection of the current notions about morality, it is one with the highest ethics.

By a dexterous transvaluation of words, Wilde makes good and evil exchange places. Even socially sin is far more useful than martyrdom, he says, since it is self-expressive rather than self-repressive. The goal of man is the liberation of personality; when the day of true culture comes, sin will be impossible because the soul will be able to transform

> into elements of a richer experience, or a finer susceptibility, or a newer mode of thought, acts or passions that with the common would be commonplace, or with the uneducated ignoble, or with the shameful vile. Is this dangerous? Yes; it is dangerous—all ideas, as I told you, are so.

What muddies this point of view in Wilde is his looking back to conventional mean-

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ings of words like sin, ignoble, and shameful. He is not so ready as Nietzsche to transvaluate these, though he does reshuffle them. His private equation is that sin is the perception of new and dangerous possibilities in action as self-consciousness is in thought and criticism is in art. He espouses individualism, and he encourages society to make individualism more complete than it can be now, and for this reason he sponsors socialism as a communal egotism, like the society made up of separate but equal works of art.

MEANTIME, before socialism, what should be thought of the criminal impulses of the artist? Increasingly in his later writings, Wilde spreads the guilt from the artist to all men. If we are all insincere, masked, and lying, then the artist is prototype rather than exception. If all the sheep are black, then the artist cannot be blamed for not being white. Such an exculpation is implied in three of Wilde's plays after *Salome—Lady Windermere's Fan, A Woman of No Importance, An Ideal Husband*. Wilde allows his characters to be found guilty, but no guiltier than others, and more courageous in their wrongdoing.

Even as he defends them, he allows them to be mildly punished. Half-consciously, Wilde was preparing himself for another abrupt shift in his experience, such as he had made in 1886. It would be false to say that Wilde wanted to go to prison, yet the notion had frequently crossed his mind. He had always associated himself with the *poètes maudits*, always considered obloquy a certificate of literary merit. In "The Soul of Man under Socialism" he had opposed suffering, yet acknowledged that the Russian novelists had rediscovered a great medieval theme, the realisation of man through suffering. More particularly, in a review of a new book of poems by Wilfrid Scawen Blunt in 1889, he began: "Prison has had an admirable effect on Mr. Wilfrid Blunt as a poet." It was like the effect of crime on Wainewright. Blunt had been merely witty and affected earlier, now his work had more depth. "Mr. Balfour must be praised," Wilde says jestingly, since "by sending Mr. Blunt to gaol... [he] has converted a clever rhymer into an earnest and deep-thinking poet." Six years later, just before his own disgrace, Wilde wrote in "The Soul of Man under Socialism," "After all, even in prison a man can be quite free." These hints indicate that Wilde was prepared, or thought he was, for trial and prison, and expected he would derive artistic profit from them. He had no idea of running away, even on a boyish holiday, whatever his friends might say. Instead he accepted imperial authority as readily as Christ had done—a precedent he discovered for himself, though hardly the first or last in hot water to do so. Blunt's poems written in prison were called *In Vinculis*, and Wilde's letter to Douglas from prison, which we know by Ross's title as *De Profundis*, was originally entitled by Wilde *Epistola: In Carcere et Vinculis*.

Hélas! Wilde's literary career was not transmogrified by prison as he hoped, but his experiences there, which were so much worse than he anticipated, gave him his final theme. "*La prison m'a complètement changé*," he said to Gide at Berneval; "*je comptais sur elle pour cela*." As before, he made no effort to exonerate himself by saying that his sins were venial or not sins at all. Defences of homosexual or "Uranian" love were common enough at this period; he did not make them. But he reached for the main implication of his disgrace through a double negative; though men thought he was unlike them, he was *not*. He was a genuine scapegoat.

THIS ULTIMATE CONCEPTION of himself was never put into an essay, but it is involved in his *De Profundis* letter to Douglas, and in *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. Both are predictably full of imagery of Christ. Before this Wilde had depreciated pity as a motive in art; now he embraced it. The hero of his poem is a man who has murdered his mistress and is about to be hanged for his crime. Wilde identifies himself closely with this prisoner. The poem's tenor is that the prisoners are humanity, all of whom are felons:

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!...

Some love too little, some too long,
Some sell, and others buy;
Some do the deed with many tears,
And some without a sigh:
For each man kills the thing he loves,
Yet each man does not die.

This poem was chosen for the *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* by Yeats, but he removed what he regarded as the commentary, including these stanzas. His effort to improve the poem evokes sympathy; it must be said, however, that whatever the quality of the bare narrative that Yeats prints, for Wilde—as for D. H. Lawrence and most readers—the commentary was the excessive and yet determining part of the poem. During the six years before his imprisonment he had demonstrated first that the artist was basically

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and usefully criminal, and second that criminality was not confined to artists, but was to be found as commonly among members of the Cabinet. Where most men pretend to a virtue they don't have, the artist, fully aware of his own sins, takes on those they don't acknowledge. The purpose of sin has subtly shifted in Wilde's mind—it is no longer a means for the artist of extending the boundaries of action, it is a means for him to focus and enshrine guilt. He has the courage, exceptional among men, of looking into the heart of things and finding there not brotherly love so much as murder, not self-love so much as suicide. In recognising the universality of guilt he is like Christ; in revealing his own culpability he plays the role of his own Judas. Wilde, who had written in one of his poems that we are ourselves "the lips betraying and the life betrayed," had in fact brought about his own conviction. The result was that he was remarried to the society from which he had divorced himself; he was no outcast, for he accepted and even sought the punishment which other men, equally guilty, would only submit to vicariously through him, just as all the prisoners suffer with the doomed murderer. By means of submission and suffering he gives his life a new purpose, and writes over the palimpsest once again.

In this concern with social role Wilde has clearly moved away from Pater, and perhaps we can conceive of him as moving towards another writer, Jean Genet. Genet is of course ferocious and remorseless in a way that Wilde was not, and makes much less concession to the world. But the two men share an insistence on their own criminality and on a possible sanction for it. The comparison with Christ has been irresistible for both. As Genet says in *Thief's Journal*:

> Let us ignore the theologians. "Taking upon Himself the sins of the world" means exactly this: experiencing potentially and in their effects all sins; it means having subscribed to evil. Every creator must thus shoulder—the expression seems feeble—must make his own, to the point of knowing it to be his substance, circulating in his arteries, the evil given by him, which his heroes choose freely.

Wilde in *De Profundis* remembered having remarked to Gide that "there was nothing that . . . Christ had said that could not be transferred immediately into the sphere of Art, and there find its complete fulfilment." And again, Genet speaks like Wilde of the courage required to do wrong, saying: "If he has courage, the guilty man decides to be what crime has made him." He wishes to obtain "the recognition of evil." Both writers envisage a regeneration which can come only from total assumption of their proclivities and their lot; as Genet puts it:

> I shall destroy appearances, the casings will burn away and one evening I shall appear there, in the palm of your hand, quiet and pure, like a glass statuette. You will see me. Round about me there will be nothing left.

Wilde summons for this sacred moment a red rose growing from the hanged man's mouth, a white one from his heart. He had terrified André Gide by trying to persuade that strictly reared young man to authorise evil, as to some extent in the *acte gratuit* Gide did, and it is just such authorisation that Genet asserts with more fierceness than Wilde.

In his criticism and in his work generally, Wilde balanced two ideas which, we have observed, look contradictory. One is that art is disengaged from actual life, the other that it is deeply incriminated with it. The first point of view is sometimes taken by Yeats, though only to qualify it, the second without qualification by Genet. That art is sterile, and that it is infectious, are attitudes not beyond reconciliation. Wilde never formulated their union, but he implied something like this: by its creation of beauty art reproaches the world, calling attention to the world's faults through their very omission; so the sterility of art is an affront or a parable. Art may also outrage the world by flouting its laws or by picturing indulgently their violation. Or art may seduce the world by making it follow an example which seems bad but is discovered to be better than it seems. In these various ways the artist forces the world towards self-recognition, with at least a tinge of self-redemption.

Yet this ethical or almost ethical view of art coexists in Wilde with its own cancellation. He could write *Salome* with one hand, dwelling upon incest and necrophilia, and show them as self-defeated, punished by execution and remorse. With the other hand, he could dissolve by the critical intellect all notions of sin and guilt. He does so in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which is all insouciance where *Salome* is all incrimination. In *The Importance of Being Earnest* sins which are presented as accursed in *Salome* and unnameable in *Dorian Gray* are translated into a different key, and appear as Algernon's inordinate and selfish craving for—cucumber sandwiches. The substitution of mild gluttony for fearsome lechery renders all vice harmless. There *is* a wicked brother, but he is just our old friend Algernon. The double life which is so serious a matter for Dorian or for The Ideal Husband, becomes a harmless Bun-

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

burying, or playing Jack in the country and Ernest in town. In the earlier, four-act version of the play, Wilde even parodied punishment, by having a bailiff come to take Jack to Holloway Prison (as Wilde himself was soon to be taken) not for homosexuality, but for running up food bills at the Savoy. Jack is disinclined, he says, to be imprisoned in the suburbs for dining in town, and makes out a cheque. The notion of expiation is also mocked; as Cecily observes: "They have been eating muffins. That looks like repentance." Finally, the theme of regeneration is parodied in the efforts of Ernest and Jack to be baptised. (By the way, in the earlier version Prism is also about to be baptised, and someone comments, "To be born again would be of considerable advantage to her.") The ceremonial unmasking at the play's end, which had meant death for Dorian Gray, leaves everyone bare-faced for a new puppet show, that of matrimony. Yet amusing as it all is, much of the comedy derives from Wilde's own sense of the realities of what are being mocked. He was in only momentary refuge from his more usual cycle which ran from scapegoat to scapegoat.

During his stay in prison Wilde took up the regeneration theme in *De Profundis* and after being freed he resumed it in *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. But he was too self-critical not to find the notion of rebirth a little preposterous. When his friends complained of his resuming old habits, he said, "A patriot put in prison for loving his country, loves his country, and a poet in prison for loving boys, loves boys." But to write about himself as unredeemed, unpunished, unreborn, to claim that his sins were nothing, that his form of love was more noble than most other people's, that what had happened to him was the result merely of legal obtuseness, was impossible for Wilde. So long as he had been a scapegrace the door to comedy was still open; once having accepted the role of scapegoat the door was closed. He conceived of a new play, but it was in his earlier mode and he could not write it. Cramped to one myth, and that sombre and depleted, Wilde could not extricate himself. There was nothing to do but die, which accordingly he did. But not without one final assertion of a past enthusiasm: he was converted to Catholicism the night before his death.

The Victory

I think it's yours. Furrowing the
Sweat-nights, groping for metaphors
—Like the bed's cool patches—
It was hope even then. And other fluences

Carried me somewhere: as, telepathy:
Winging blind wires to carry somehow
News to you. Mad, but it all allowed
The thing to continue. Now, though,

The wires are down. My brain can't ever seem
To stop still enough to think you. My
Bland words talk alone about themselves.
It's yours, this victory then,

By simple waiting. And, if only you
Might find just what you truly wish through
That same patience—building where
You use it now to reap such disrepair.

Alan Brownjohn

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THEATRE

Mini-Hamlets in Limbo

By John Weightman

IN *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Mr. Tom Stoppard has had, or appears to have had, a brilliant idea. It has always been said, at least by the old-fashioned critics, that Shakespeare's characters "go on existing" after they have left the stage, whereas those of the classical French dramatists—Racine's or Molière's, for instance—do not. A Shakespeare play is not, primarily, *une pièce bien faite*, a dramatic machine with a sleek and visible mechanism, although the mechanism may be there all right. It is more like a hunk of material ripped out of life. You feel that if it were put back into place, it would at once link up again in all directions, so that we could know how many children Lady Macbeth had and how the poem "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came" actually goes on. Mr. Stoppard has walked off into the wings to imagine the extra-textual reality of two characters in *Hamlet*, whose Shakespearian appearances are tantalisingly incomplete. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern never come on to the stage, and are never referred to, except as a couple, as if their psychological charge were too slight to allow them to exist separately. Hamlet greets them warmly as old friends and then, a little later, sends them off without compunction to their deaths. They appear fitfully, do nothing very much, and then disappear. This being so, Mr. Stoppard has decided that they can be developed as modern anti-heroes. They are siblings in nonentity, sharing a ridiculous Tweedledum/Tweedledee part; they never fully get the hang of the situation and they are swatted like flies through being accidentally caught up in the tragedy.

Before setting to work, he has obviously read his illustrious predecessors in the contemporary theatre, since the text abounds in allusions. At times it seems as if he has put *Waiting for Godot* inside *Hamlet*, and one admires the courage of a young man who has the nerve to do this. His characters needle each other in a vacuum, like the imprisoned souls in *Huis Clos*. Their prose is occasionally disguised Eliotish verse, with a note of ponderous, philosophical inquiry which may, or may not, be taking itself seriously:

> There is an art to the building up of suspense,
> Though it can be done by luck alone,
> If that's the word I'm after.
>
> * * *
>
> A weaker man might be moved
> To re-examine his faith,
> If in nothing else
> At least in the law of probability.

The stage business becomes reminiscent of the mirror-like complexities of Genet, when the Players put on for them a play within the play within the play. All these echoes reinforce the up-to-date nature of this comedy team—one skinny, the other rather plump, one intellectual, the other rather dim, one slightly hysterical, the other quite robust, etc. If Hamlet himself can be looked upon as the great pre-Existentialist hero in European drama—bastardised by his uncle's usurpation, puzzled by contingency, uncertain about how to exercise his freedom, distressed to the point of craziness by the absence of essences—Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, when treated like this, become little Hamlets, whose uneasiness is a wry, apologetic modern echo of the Prince's splendid Renaissance melancholia.

THE IDEA IS BRILLIANT and produces a certain amount of fun, but I don't think it is worked out with complete success. The action is not a legitimate extension of the minimal identity that Shakespeare gives Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *Hamlet*, and so Mr. Stoppard's play operates at an uncomfortable tangent to Shakespeare's. To reduce, or elevate, his protagonists to the status of "outsiders" with whom we can sympathise, Mr. Stoppard has to curtail their biggest Shakespearean scene, because in it they appear as rather silly time-servers, at the opposite pole from Horatio, the friend of sterling quality. Also, he has to put them into a limbo which is largely gratuitous.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We first see them during a pause in their journey to court, and they are presented as having uncertain memories of their past identity. Of course, Existentialist anti-heroes are frequently amnesiac or semi-amnesiac, since their anguish comes partly from living in the ever-moving present, with the past constantly crumbling into nothingness behind them. But Rosencrantz and Guildenstern cannot come out of the void into the action of *Hamlet*; they would only obey the summons if they understood it, and it seems portentous to surround them with questionings as if they were the Magi en route for an unknown Bethlehem or Vladimir and Estragon really waiting for Godot. Similarly, once they get to court, they would know what was going on there since, as courtiers, they would be in the thick of the gossip. On this point, Mr. Stoppard wobbles; he both shows them as understanding the situation to a certain extent and as deliberately killing time in limbo when they are not taking part in the action. Every now and again, the plot of *Hamlet* swirls in and around them and they fall into their Shakespearean roles in Shakespearean English, whereas before they had been talking in 20th-century voices. But it is as if they were members of the audience seeing only those snatches of *Hamlet* in which they themselves are involved, the rest of the play remaining a closed book ("I don't pretend to have understood. . . . If they won't tell us, that's their affair"). If this is meant as a symbol, it can only signify that we see our lives as an intermittent, incomprehensible dream, of which we never grasp the plot. But even those people most subject to *Angst* are never as much in the dark as this, except perhaps about collective, public events beyond their range. It may be true of thorough-going schizophrenics, but Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not made as pathological as that.

IN ANY CASE, at one point Mr. Stoppard completely contradicts this general impression of ignorance by making Rosencrantz and Guildenstern impersonate Hamlet and envisage the situation very penetratingly from his point of view:

> ROS: To sum up: your father, whom you love, dies, you are his heir, you come back to find that hardly was the corpse cold before his young brother popped on to his throne and into his sheets, thereby offending both legal and natural practice. Now why are you behaving in this extraordinary manner?
>
> GUIL: I can't imagine!

This is a witty demolition of Shakespeare's plot. There would be no *Hamlet*, if the Prince, instead of feigning madness and complicating all the issues, took the obvious course and denounced his uncle publicly from the start as an arrant usurper, which is what he would have done, had he been a character in one of the historical plays. The Ghost, the Players, the interview with Gertrude, the trip to England are all, strictly speaking, unnecessary, and Shakespeare does nothing to justify them, apart from making them the occasion of splendid poetry. All those marvellous words cover up much ado about nothing. The King should not need Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to tell him why Hamlet is uneasy; his problem is rather to know why, in the circumstances, Hamlet has not already begun to topple him from the throne. However, I don't think we worry about this as we watch *Hamlet*. We take it for granted that neither the Prince nor the King does the straightforward, rational thing, because, if they did, Shakespeare would not have been able to give us this extended lament on the puzzling nature of human existence. But we do worry, or at least I worry, about the fact that Mr. Stoppard's heroes are not properly connected up to *Hamlet*, because *Hamlet* is, after all, where they come from. The other alternative is to say that *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* has nothing to do with *Hamlet*, but is a dialogue between two near-Existentialist heroes, occasionally decorated with quotations from Shakespeare in an inconsequential, Pop-art manner.

EVEN IF THIS interpretation is the correct one, it is still difficult to see at times on what level the author wishes us to understand his text. The play opens with a long scene in which Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are whiling away the time by spinning coins. The result has been heads in about a hundred throws in succession. This is, of course, a miracle, which is presumably intended to enhance the sense of awe surrounding the summons to the court. Yet these intimations of Someone pulling strings from the Beyond for an Ultimate Purpose are not backed up by any metaphysical beliefs. Shakespeare can use the Ghost in his first scene, because the supernatural was still part of his accepted stock-in-trade. Eliot and Claudel are on weaker ground when they introduce miracles into their plays, since stage thaumaturgy costs nothing and proves nothing, but one could argue that, being convinced Christians, they no doubt believed in miracles, and therefore were free, as between Christians, to use imagined miracles for poetic effect. But Mr. Stoppard's miracle is a sort of *hors d'oeuvre*, a mere incidental theatrical gimmick, which gives an excuse for some mildly entertaining back-chat and funny stage-business, but has no significance beyond itself.

Perhaps the whole play is just intellectual

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fooling around, with occasional stabs at seriousness. Now and again, one suspects that Mr. Stoppard is trying to be genuinely poetic and is inviting us to commune with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in some emotion. Since the performers are attractive, we allow ourselves to be beguiled and then are suddenly let down, because the poetry is spurious. For instance, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are pleased to meet up with the Players, who offer an unexpected distraction during the initial period of waiting. But the troupe turns out to be a sorry band, scraping a living by doing obscene pantomimes and forcing their least unattractive member to function as male whore. On discovering this, Guildenstern, "shaking with rage and fright," exclaims passionately at the disillusionment of the chance encounter:

> . . . it didn't have to be *obscene*. . . . It could have been a bird out of season, dropping bright-feathered on my shoulder. . . . It could have been a tongueless dwarf standing by the road to point the way. . . .

The bird out of season and the tongueless dwarf are surely *kitsch*, but are we meant to appreciate them as being symptomatic of Guildenstern's camp vibration, or to enjoy them as poetry? I guess that Mr. Stoppard is hoping for the latter reaction but would settle for the former, and so the former it inevitably is. When, at the end, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern go wittingly to their deaths "to give their lives a meaning," the effect is equally thin and camp.

As THE PLAY progresses, we see that the only other characters Rosencrantz and Guildenstern commune with in their limbo are the Players and, in fact, the leading player, Graham Crowden, almost steals the show. This is another Existentialist commonplace; if the average person is so befuddled by contingency that he can only give himself an identity by accepting this or that form of "bad faith," then the actor can become the modern hero, since he sits loose to all identities and plays with them at will. At the same time, he only becomes "subject" by deliberately making himself "object" for contemplation by others; if the others stop watching, his identity as subject/object sputters away like a collapsing balloon. This is beautifully expressed in one of the speeches by the leading Player when he complains about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern asking his troupe to put on a show and then not staying to see it through. These exchanges between the Player and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern seem to me to be the best bits in the work. The Player has a strong presence, because he accepts only two basic forces, greed and lust, and looks upon all the superstructures as provisional and interchangeable; this is a rudimentary philosophy which works up to a point. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have likable non-presences; they are comparable to actors who haven't yet been adequately briefed about their parts and who are playing word-games or indulging in random reflections until the playwright or the director makes up his mind. Curiously enough, the newspapers say Mr. Stoppard was a journalist until he became a dramatist. He strikes me as being a born man of the theatre, but whether the expression is to be taken in its very good, or its less good, sense, I would not yet like to bet.

Poem

Tabula rasa—Ha, ha!
Beyond the ha-ha lie the fields—
Cattle and sheep lazily grazing;
Woods with leaves alight and blazing;
Fields with five-barred gates, all leading
To more fields, hidden adventure,
Donkeys, thistles, four-leaf clovers,
Picnics, toad-stools, safe lovers.
Through and over stiles and hedgerows
'Til the world sweeps wide and hazy.
Wide horizons gently touching the sky.

Lindy Murray

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FILM

Scrutinising

By Richard Mayne

WHERE IS the F. R. Leavis of the film? To put the question at all is to highlight its apparent absurdity: it seems to belong to the "Wagner is the Puccini of music" school of journalistic substitutes for thought. But behind it lurks a real problem. Many film critics—I was one myself for three years—are troubled not only by their craft's inherent difficulties, but also by the fact that its standards are far less rigorous than those normally applied to books.

This isn't just a matter of the distinction between criticism and reviewing. Several regular reviewers—Graham Greene in the pre-war *Spectator* and *Night and Day*, James Agee in some of his *Time* and *Life* pieces, Gavin Lambert and Lindsay Anderson in *Sequence*, Richard Winningham in the old *News Chronicle*, John Coleman in the *New Statesman*, some of today's *Sight and Sound* writers, and one or two others elsewhere—have fought effectively against their obvious limitations: lack of space, the multiplicity of mediocre films, the pressure to be "entertaining," the necessity to be quick. It is sometimes forgotten, too, that much of *Scrutiny*'s literary criticism used reviewing as its springboard. In the film world, however, there's little to compare with Leavis' *The Common Pursuit*, to say nothing of *The Great Tradition*. On second reading, long established "classics" of writing about the cinema often seem as superficial as reviews of last week's blockbuster: for if recent films are usually over-rated, so are those of forty years ago. The general level of response, moreover, seems strikingly low. Readers of film histories must surely be surfeited, by now, with accounts of the Odessa Steps sequence from *The Battleship Potemkin*, or the "knife" episode in Alfred Hitchcock's *Blackmail*. Both, it is true, make a strong immediate impact: but aren't both essentially simplistic—one in the service of propaganda, the other a melodramatic trick? Wouldn't a fully realised work of art have revealed further complexities in the *Potemkin* mutiny? Wouldn't Hitchcock's admitted skill be more impressive if he'd used it to more serious purpose? Perhaps so, perhaps not; but although the question seems worth discussing, it's one that most film critics ignore. Some of the reasons, I suspect, can be traced back to the earliest days of the cinema.

The film as we know it was born of the peep-show. Like television, it owes much of its power to hypnosis, to the strange fascination of that seeming impossibility—a picture that moves. In the grip of this spell, it is hard to be fully and critically responsive: even the worst films may disarm us more drastically than a book or a play. Hence the success of cinema and television as means of mass entertainment: hence, too, the uneasiness of the critic.

He may be merely embarrassed by the Barnum-and-Bailey associations that films still retain. For far too long, critics felt obliged to discuss whether or not it was legitimate to consider *The Cinema as Art*: even as late as 1965, when Ralph Stephenson and J. R. Debrix published a Pelican Book under that title, its blurb dutifully answered the charge that this was "a pretentious contradiction in terms." More often, however, the critic's embarrassment goes deeper. At one extreme, unwillingly beguiled by work whose credentials he is bound to question, he may be unduly dismissive, suppressing personal sympathies he both feels and distrusts. At the other, moved to explain preferences that require close analysis, he may seek their justification in elaborate theories of "film aesthetics." One impressive attempt of this kind was made by Raymond Williams and Michael Orrom in their 1954 *Preface to Film*; but the approach has dangers that aren't always easy to avoid. Siegfried Kracauer, the well-known author of *From Caligari to Hitler*, published in 1961 a volume of film theory which matched the weight of that Freudian-Marxist survey of early German cinema. Its title was *Nature of Film: the Redemption of Physical Reality*—and much of its text was a similarly anguished struggle between German thought and the English language.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Great learning, many insights, and a courageous determination to construct a single system, all contrasted strangely with a fundamentally *simpliste* approach. In some respects, like other books of abstract aesthetics, it recalled the remark in a novel by Peter De Vries: "He has a lot more depth."—"Only on the surface. Deep down, he's shallow."

This point was made, less curtly, in an eight-page review of Kracauer's book that appeared in *Sight and Sound*. But the reviewer in question, Pauline Kael, used language no less disconcerting than the "pedantry" she deplored. "It's obvious that he really loves certain movies...." "Musicals, which he obviously adores. . . ." "Art," she declared, "is the greatest game, the supreme entertainment, because you discover the game as you play it."

In a literary context, both the tone and the statement might have aroused dissent: but although several readers came to Kracauer's rescue, no one seemed dissatisfied with the level of the debate. There'd be little point in recalling this now if it weren't that so much writing about the cinema assumes a similar air of scapegrace jauntiness—presumably for fear of protesting too much. At its best, as in Alistair Cooke's 1937 anthology of film reviews *Garbo and the Night Watchmen,* this has a certain obstreperous charm; but in its anxiety not to appear solemn it seems to betray the same basic embarrassment, arising from the ambiguous status of the film.

IF THIS DATES BACK to the earliest days of film-making, so does the second of the critic's disabilities. Just because, that is, the making of films is so complex and technical a business, much of the energy that might have gone into criticism has had to be expended on description and explanation. Most of the best-known studies of *Film Form* or *The Film Sense* (Eisenstein), *Film Technique* (Pudovkin), *Film World* (Ivor Montague), or *The Art of the Film* (Ernest Lindgren) could be better described by the title of Raymond Spottiswoode's manual, *A Grammar of the Film*. It's almost as if the study of literature were chiefly concerned with semantics, calligraphy, typography, layout, book-binding, retailing, and the history of typewriter design. At the same time, the film's origins as mass entertainment, and the early prestige of Soviet cinema, combined to give much film criticism a bias towards "social consciousness" that it has never entirely lost. As a result, the same critic who analyses in scrupulous detail the technical means of achieving some fine effect may accept as its ultimate purpose a conventional melodrama or a "message" of mind-numbing naïvety. Re-reading Pudovkin today, it is astonishing to see how often the examples he quotes belong to the world of the adventure story; re-reading Grierson or Paul Rotha, one's struck by the over-simplicity of their political assumptions, which may indeed be valid but certainly aren't validated in the text. The same is true, in a quite different sense, of some other outstanding directors—Cocteau or René Clair. Understandably enough, when they've talked or written about their work, they too have ignored ends for means, concentrating on absorbing technicalities—just as their chroniclers and biographers have done. And so, between the tipsters and the theorists, the propagandists and the technicians, the critic's function remains neglected.

ONE FURTHER REASON, I suspect, is the result of historical accident. Because the earliest films were silent, those who took them seriously were inclined to see them as a development from visual rather than dramatic art. This isn't to say that dramatic elements were absent, but only that much attention was focused on an entirely new experience which was difficult to treat in words. Even today, re-visiting silent films, one can sense the hold they must have had on their original audiences: once the first incongruity's overcome, the flicker of images begins to engage a new, more alert attention, akin to that which poetry demands. One is suddenly stilled and watchful. The drama—or the melodrama, as it frequently was—becomes less relevant: awareness is quickened in a wholly different key. One understands René Clair's chagrin at the advent of sound, which at first reduced the cinema, as he put it, to "that lugubrious setting where pale faces in the night exchange stentorian confidences."

Despite the continued intrusions of dubbing, film music, and commentaries, the use of sound is no longer so disruptive as it was. But there's still discontinuity between the film as pattern and the film as drama. In *Lawrence of Arabia,* to quote a familiar example, a film unsatisfactory as a whole was partly redeemed by its second unit's photography, lovingly exploring the shades and shapes of the desert. Faced with such discrepancies, the critic's response is inevitably divided; and because the traditional canons of film criticism originated in the silent era, his professional bent may well make him more attentive to his visual experience than to the full complexity of the film. In the case of the earliest critics, indeed, highly sensitive appreciation of a film's plastic elements seems often to have precluded any attempt to evaluate what others might regard as its content.

This, of course, explains the bewilderment of a later generation at seeing for the first time

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

some of the vaunted "classics" of the screen. Are these creaking crudities the masterpieces we've read about in the handbooks? Is this Boy's-Own-Paper universe the imaginative world that adults once accepted? It all seems incredible to us now. Do we simply lack a sense of history? Or is our dissatisfaction a sign of greater maturity in the world of film? To my mind, the answer is—both. How this can be so is suggested, I think, by three recent books which embody three successive approaches to the problem of film criticism: Lotte Eisner's *L'Écran Démoniaque,* Roger Manvell's *New Cinema in Europe,* and Eric Rhode's *Tower of Babel.*[1]

L'Écran Démoniaque was originally written as a history of the German silent cinema, commissioned by an Italian publisher; when he went bankrupt, it was published in France in 1952, but with certain cuts and an additional chapter on pre-Hitlerian talking pictures. The present edition restores the cut passages and includes some new material on both the silent and the later periods: the last film it mentions is *Der Verlorene* (1951). With innumerable illustrations and an authoritative "filmography" of the first crucial twenty years, it's the most comprehensive book on its subject yet to be written. Its author was closely involved in the German cinema as a film journalist in Berlin, then later joined the *Cinémathèque Française* in Paris: she is well placed, therefore, to be both knowledgeable and objective.

Quite early on, she faces the central problem of coming to terms with films that now strike us as absurd. "We have noticed," she says,

> at retrospective showings of so-called "expressionist" German films that the sudden and excessive gestures of the actors often make the audience laugh. This is not entirely due to the running of these films on projectors designed for sound; when they are played at the original speed they still astonish the spectator who is unaccustomed to them. . . .
>
> This theatrical ecstasy, this wholly external pathos, these solemn and flowery subtitles, are foreign to us; they belong to a bygone age when opposition to bourgeois conventionality easily passed for nobility or even heroism.

Elsewhere she speaks of the "pompous fatuity" of Emil Jennings, only sometimes appropriate to the parts he played, and of "the old-fashioned, ridiculous nature of certain situations, the strained, affected playing of an actress like Ressel Orla with her ample bosom." Less sympathetic spectators might quote even the films that tradition, and Miss Eisner, regard as classics: *Caligari, Metropolis, Dr. Mabuse der Spieler.* Cities of the future, lifelike robots, mad master criminals and their somnabulist puppets —so many of them would seem childish if they didn't seem demented. And yet the skill of their directors lies in making us believe—at a level far deeper than that of the plot.

Miss Eisner's title, in fact, is particularly appropriate. The cinema, generally speaking, has everywhere given Romanticism a last and lengthy Indian Summer; but nowhere more so than in Germany. "Warning Shadows" was the English name given to the 1922 film *Schatten:* the original bore the subtitle *"Eine nächtliche Halluzination."* Both encapsulate the peculiar nightmare of so much German cinema, best communicated by Miss Eisner in her description of Fritz Lang's *Kriemhilds Rache,* Part II of his *Nibelungen*:

> Chiaroscuro comes to life, undulating fluidly; movement becomes frenetic, distracted, shadows infiltrate into areas of light, and the kaleidoscopic atmosphere, no longer monumental and immobile, becomes as breathless as the heroes in their death-struggle. Horses, their manes flying in the wind, gallop at frantic speed across vast steppes; gaping caverns erode the ground, revealing the ant-like turmoil of life beneath it; demons do battle on a field of carnage in a cannibalistic frenzy. Everywhere are snares, destruction, felony; nameless violence explodes at every step, the smell of blood is bitter in the air; weapons are smashed in clouds of dust, and rolling columns of smoke writhe like great serpents round the few survivors, smothering them.

Language of this sort rings oddly in foreign ears; and at one point Miss Eisner apologises to her French readers for the metaphorical propensities of German. It is clear that she attaches much weight to notions of national character, on which she quotes a number of past witnesses, including Madame de Staël. For Miss Eisner, the Germans have "an innate uneasiness"; they "prefer half-darkness to light"; they "take singular pleasure in evoking horror"; they "have a pronounced fondness for exclamation marks"; they like "slowness," although it repels the quick French mind; in Germany "chaos and despair are propitious to creation."

Some of these are certainly wild assertions: but it is difficult not to feel that they at least apply to German films. What still impresses us in the German cinema is not so much any single, integral work of art, but an atmosphere, a *Stimmung,* which links it to painting as much as to drama or literature. Speaking of some later works she regards as mediocre, Miss

[1] *L'Écran Démoniaque.* By Lotte H. Eisner. Le Terrain Vague, Paris; English distributor: Rodney Books, 60s. *New Cinema in Europe.* By Roger Manvell. Studio Vista, 10s. 6d. *Tower of Babel: Speculations on the Cinema.* By Eric Rhode. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 36s. New York: Chitton House, $5·95.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eisner points out that "chiaroscuro, the heritage of Reinhardt and of Expressionism, confers on certain films a semblance of artistic value (a quality often owing more to the designer's sketches and the cameraman's talent than to the director)." Adding "or to the script-writer," one might apply this to some of the established "classics." As Pabst insisted, "what counts is the image." This explains why excerpts and stills from the early German cinema are often more impressive than the films themselves. It also explains why throughout *L'Écran Démoniaque* Miss Eisner writes as an art critic rather than a film critic; but if this limits her ultimate achievement, it gives an extended and deeper meaning to the idea of "the Cinema as Art." Its scope, in other words, is not narrower but wider than that of literature: any "F. R. Leavis of the film" would have to be, say, a Nikolaus Pevsner as well.

THE GRADUAL ACCEPTANCE of this notion, in Britain at least, owes as much to Roger Manvell as to anyone. A few years ago, when the then editor of *Sight and Sound* anonymously published—elsewhere—"A First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Critics," it seemed to become fashionable to belittle Manvell's achievement and the effort he'd put into it—his innumerable lecture tours, his work for the British Film Institute, his encouragement of the film society movement. But anyone with even the dimmest notion of how films and film criticism stood in 1944 will agree that the publication in that year of Manvell's Pelican *Film* was a real landmark. Here for the first time was a primer that brought to the cinema a well-informed and critical sensibility which was neither befogged by theory, Marxist or otherwise, nor over-absorbed by the sheer hypnotic novelty of pictures that move. The book's weaknesses—some plodding explanation and exegesis; a nervous, popularising defence of the film as an art form; the use of sometimes fugitive recent examples—were largely implicit in the nature of its task, opening up for a large audience some facets of experience of which they were scarcely aware. Now, more than twenty years later, it's tempting to imagine that this awareness always existed: that foreign films have always found a ready response in Britain, that minority cinemas were always as numerous as they are today. But in fact, despite competition from television, despite the departure from feature films of many directors of the 'forties and 'fifties, despite even diminished audiences at some of the repertory cinemas, there's now much greater readiness than ever before to accept experiment: the work of exegesis hasn't been entirely vain.

ONE INDEX of this is the extraordinary renaissance in European film-making, chronicled four years ago by Penelope Houston in *The Contemporary Cinema* and now by Roger Manvell in *New Cinema in Europe*. Even the brief interval between these two publications has seen an enormous crop—from Eastern Europe as well as from the West. In 1963, discussing in particular modern Soviet cinema, Miss Houston shrewdly complained that "the missing element in all these films... is, simply, any real suggestion of intellectual force." Since then, as Manvell notes, we've seen Kozintsev's remarkable *Hamlet* and the promising first episode of Bondarchuk's *War and Peace*; while Czechoslovakia has produced the subtle and diffident films of Milos Forman to rival those from Poland which Miss Houston had already praised. In the West, meanwhile, as Manvell puts it, "the shift during the 1950s and 1960s has been in the direction of greater complexity...." "The old, hard-and-fast line of demarcation between the low and middle-brow cinema on the one hand, and the isolated high-brow cinema on the other, that existed both before and to some extent after the war, has become blurred, though it has by no means disappeared." In so far as this reflects a growing acceptance of greater maturity in the cinema, it can't be divorced from the raising of critical standards, which Manvell—in Britain—has done much to assist.

Nevertheless, it remains difficult to acquiesce entirely in such reassuring conclusions; and Manvell himself doesn't always help. His own phraseology, as above, occasionally seems debatable, and terms like "realism" or "naturalism" are used more often than they're examined. Where there's so little space for anything but critical labelling, some recent films—as in the past—seem to be over-valued, perhaps for their technical novelty. Lindsay Anderson's *This Sporting Life*, for instance, is praised as follows: "In the tradition of heightened realism, it is the most advanced film that Britain has so far made." Yet this is the same film that one academic literary critic, in a recent issue of the *Scrutiny*-like *Cambridge Quarterly*, tartly dismissed as a "travesty" of David Storey's novel. No one, I think, would blame Roger Manvell for not turning a brief, comprehensive, and extremely useful booklet into a *Summa* of the cinema: but this small example points to the gulf that still separates even a very experienced film critic from his colleagues in the discipline of literature.

Tower of Babel is the first conscious attempt that I've seen to throw a pontoon across the gap. Its author, Eric Rhode, represents a third generation of film critics; and he benefits, as it

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were, from the pioneering efforts that roughened his elders' hands. Apart from film criticism in *Sight and Sound, The Listener,* and ENCOUNTER, he has written and broadcast on the other arts: so it's clear from the beginning that here is no narrow professionalism. "If the cinema is an art (and I believe it is)," he says, "then it demands a total participation from both its artists and its critics, a total saturation of the self. It calls on our feelings and intellect, sensibility and judgment, high seriousness and low humour—in fact, everything."

THIS SOUNDS promising; and in many respects its promise is kept. Part of Rhode's strength as a critic, in fact, lies in his alertness to what in literature would be the text itself. Writing on D. W. Griffith, for example, he points out that where his films become theatrical, this is not solely the effect of period convention: "crudity of technique warns us, rather, that Griffith is working at some remove from his creative feelings.... As he abandons his concern for factual truth, his technique slackens; the rhetoric of propaganda takes over, and spite is free to express itself unchecked."

This approach, which works well for Griffith —as it does for Dickens, perhaps his closest literary counterpart—seems less successful in the case of some other directors; or it may simply be that Rhode uses it less vigorously. The directors he studies at length are eleven in all: Vigo, Bresson, Eisenstein, Humphrey Jennings, Fritz Lang, Jacques Rivette, Fellini, Alain Resnais, Max Ophuls, Wajda, and Satyajit Ray. To me at least, this list suggests that Rhode didn't aim at writing a film critic's equivalent of Leavis' *The Great Tradition:* if he had, might some of his subjects not have made way for, say, René Clair, Mark Donskoi, Carl Dreyer, Flaherty, John Ford, Kurosawa, Pabst, Renoir, François Truffaut, or Visconti? Instead, his purpose was much more modest: "I wanted to learn why I was either attracted to, or angered by their films." Which angered and which attracted him is not always easy to discern. He makes many pertinent remarks—about Bresson's "beautiful sobriety"; about Eisenstein's montage, which "tends to pull us up short, to make us admire his cleverness"; about Godard's "one commitment and principal theme" which "appears to be the act of making films, the sheer joy of technical accomplishment"; about the crudeness of the ideas behind some of Jennings' editing—"by calling on his audience's feelings when his own were not engaged, he debased his currency." But he writes with such sympathy even of those he questions that the reader can only tentatively surmise that Rhode thinks little of Ingmar Bergman, has doubts about Fellini, finds Eisenstein over-rated and De Sica sentimental, while saddened by the occasional ineptness of Jennings and the political forces that make for dishonesties in some of Wajda's films.

What emerges clearly, however, from all these sensitive and thoughtful essays is a marked preference for all that's most fluid in the cinema. Wagnerian, not Mozartian; ambiguous, not committed; shifting, not clear; cloudy, not crisp; the dream, not the certainty —almost, one might add, the hypnosis, not the conviction. This, I think, accounts for his choice of certain directors—Rivette, Fellini, Resnais, Ophuls—although one wonders why he omitted Pabst. All share a quality he singles out in Resnais: at the end of *Muriel,* he says, "we feel as though we had been listening to a finely organised piece of music. Indeed, I believe music is our key to understanding the form...." Of *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad,* he remarks that "the film is like the imagery in a symbolist poem, to the extent that it refuses to disclose itself to Cartesian explanations; we need to apprehend it sensuously as we would, say, a piece of music." And analysing the lyrical symbols in Vigo's *L'Atalante,* Rhode claims that the director's imagery "gives depth to a novelettish plot."

STATEMENTS LIKE THESE surely betray their unresolved contradictions: we're back, in other words, with the paradox of our—and Rhode's —ambivalent response to the German films of Fritz Lang. On one level our demands are satisfied; on another, satisfaction is withheld. Can imagery, symbolism, musical form—however powerful or appealing—be regarded as compensations for the deep frivolity and emptiness that some find in Resnais' films, any more than they are for the "novelettish plot" of *L'Atalante* or *Dr. Mabuse*? Would the images not gain in force, and the work of art with them, if they were integrated into a unity to which our whole being could assent? This, surely, is what's implied by Rhode's approach to cinema; yet just this is the final and central question that *Tower of Babel,* excellent though it is, doesn't squarely face. Rhode is too honest a critic to spurn on second thoughts the sometimes minor films that have excited or moved him; the result is to expose even more obviously his subjection to the conflicting claims of the film as drama and the film as visual art.

So the gulf between film critics and literary critics remains. All the same, Eric Rhode's book has the great virtue of helping to reveal it; and when the time comes to build a bridge across, *Tower of Babel* will certainly be one of its supports.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MUSIC

Old Klingsor & New Bayreuth

By Peter Heyworth

IN 1951, when Wieland Wagner and his younger brother Wolfgang succeeded to the family concern in Bayreuth, the Festspielhaus seemed nothing but a relic of a distant and discreditable past. Unlike most of the temples of the Third Reich, the building itself was intact. But that massive red-brick barn, which squats on a hill outside the gloomy little Franconian town where Wagner had settled in 1874 and the Nazi leaders had later assembled to do homage to art that was indisputably *deutsch und echt*, seemed as remote from the world that emerged from Hitler's re-enactment of *Götterdämmerung* on the stage of history as Stonehenge itself. Yet by the time of his premature death last October at the age of 49, Wieland Wagner had not merely restored Bayreuth as a place of international pilgrimage, he had given it an artistic importance such as it had hardly known since his grandfather's death in 1882. As a producer he was capable of both sublimity and silliness. Yet nothing can rob him of his importance as the man who first fully revealed his prophetic relevance to the 20th century of music dramas, that once seemed the epitome of their time.

At the time when he took over the helm Wagner and his festival were suspect at every level. From its very origins Bayreuth had seemed intimately bound up with that restless period of German history which set in with the foundation of the new German Empire in 1871. True, the cash to build the new theatre had come not from that tight-pursed, philistine court in Berlin but from Ludwig II of Bavaria, who so strangely linked old world particularism with a modernist taste in music. True, Wagner himself cared as little about Bismarck as Bismarck cared about him. Yet it is not pure coincidence that both men should have fulfilled their "mission" at more or less the same moment in history. As Thomas Mann observed, "Together they formed the highpoint of a romantic hegemony of the German spirit." Or, to put it more baldly, the German century seemed at last to have dawned; after centuries of division and humiliation, a great people had finally come into their own, and lo and behold! there on that small hill outside Bayreuth stood the cultural embodiment of their new-found grandeur. To dismiss a genius as vast and all-engulfing as Wagner's as a mere expression of a cultural epoch would be crude and unjust—after all, *The Ring* is not exactly a glorification of power. But something quite basic in the tone and specific gravity of *The Ring* and *Die Meistersinger* reflects the bombast and overconfidence of the *Gründerjahre*. Nor was Wagner in his writings slow to mirror its immoderation in success, its assertive nationalism and the racialistic tones that underlay it.

Curiously enough the two people most responsible for introducing specifically National Socialist sympathies into Wahnfried, the large villa that Wagner had built for himself and his family in Bayreuth, were both English. Houston Stewart Chamberlain, one of the originators of the notion of an Aryan *Herrenvolk*, married Wagner's daughter, Eva, and settled nearby. In 1914 Wagner's only son, Siegfried, married a young English woman, *née* Winifred Marjorie Williams, who became an admirer of Hitler and a member of his party as early as 1921, and personally succoured its leaders after the collapse of the Munich *Putsch* in 1923. Thus when Siegfried and his aged mother, Cosima, both died in 1930, Bayreuth passed into hands that made no bones about their brownness. Winifred Wagner paid for her political sympathies with a harsh prison sentence in 1947, and though this was subsequently reduced, she was not permitted to resume the direction of the Bayreuth Festival, though the *Festspielhaus* was her personal property. Indeed, it was not until she renounced her heritage in favour of her two sons, Wieland and Wolfgang, and withdrew

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from all participation that the road was clear to restarting the festival.[1]

In fact the Nazis provided just what Bayreuth had always been short of: money. For the first time it found itself able to engage a chorus of a size today taken for granted. And if Heinz Tietjen's massive productions were not remarkable for much refinement of taste, there can be little doubt that Bayreuth benefited from the musical and administrative expertise of an artistic director who was also *Generalintendant* of the Berlin State Opera. Of course the festival paid heavily for the official favour it enjoyed. Toscanini at once severed all relations with it (though Richard Strauss, who had not conducted there for 39 years, was not slow to leap into the gap). What had always been an international event grew increasingly national, not to say nationalist, in tone, and though there was no direct interference in artistic matters (indeed, Hitler is said to have rejected any proposals to bend the productions so that they should mirror the Third Reich), the Nazis adopted Wagner as the cultural standard-bearer of their régime and Hitler himself was a frequent guest at Wahnfried.

But by 1945 Bayreuth's difficulties lay deeper than its political affiliations, embarrassing though these were. Since Wagner's death the world had experienced a vast upheaval of thought and feeling. In the years between the wars it had undergone a violent revulsion from romanticism in general and Wagnerianism in particular. When Hindemith in his early (1921) opera *Nuschi-Nuschi* accompanied a castration scene with an excerpt from *Tristan* on a solo trombone, he was thumbing his nose at Wagner and expressing what a whole generation felt about him. Similarly, Stravinsky's dogma that words and music are two separate orders that cannot be imposed on each other can only be understood as a reaction from Wagner's attempt to forge them into an indissoluble unity. Indeed the one thing that unites composers as diverse as Berg and Stravinsky, Shostakovich and Webern, Hindemith and Milhaud, Honegger and even Strauss in his later years, was a determination to cast off the whole armour of Wagnerianism, its inflated dimensions, its sumptuous textures, its heroic gestures and its habit of breathing heavily down the listener's neck.

Meanwhile at Bayreuth the festival had continued as though the clocks had stopped with Wagner's death. During Cosima's long reign, which lasted until 1906 (though she was present in the background, a formidable, imperious figure, until her death in 1930), every detail of the original productions of *The Ring* and *Parsifal*, which Wagner had himself supervised, acquired the authority of ritual. When Chamberlain was rash enough to bring to his mother-in-law's notice the revolutionary stage designs of Adolphe Appia, her reaction was characteristic. "Appia," she replied, "does not seem to know that *The Ring* was produced here in 1876 and therefore there is nothing more to be discovered in the field of scenery and production...."[2]

Her gentle, easy-going son, Siegfried (how such a mouse was born of two such formidable lions is a question I leave to geneticists and psychologists) had neither the will, nor probably even the wish, to defy his mother. A pupil of Humperdinck, a composer of modest fairy-tale operas and one of nature's conservatives, he was all too at home with the naturalistic productions and settings he inherited. He did, in fact, go to see the notorious (police had to be stationed round the house at the first performance) "cubist" production of *Der fliegende Holländer*, which Otto Klemperer conducted at the Berlin Kroll Opera in 1929, in which the girls did not spin but made fish nets and (crowning impiety) the Dutchman was deprived of his beard. Characteristically, he does not seem to have been able to make up his mind one way or the other about this historic production, though he is said later to have dismissed it, in the terminology of the day, as *kulturbolschewistisch*. In any case such reinterpretations had no impact on a Bayreuth where sets were not so much redesigned as renovated like worn-out furniture. By 1930 the *Festspielhaus* had become a mausoleum.

In the normal course of events the death of both Siegfried and his mother might have been expected to dissolve the unnatural cocoon in which Bayreuth had protected itself against the passage of time. But Winifred Wagner was young and inexperienced and an object of suspicion to Siegfried's sisters. And for all Tietjen's musical and administrative ability, there is no reason to suppose that his attitude to Wagner was anything other than basically conventional, or that he had a strongly

[1] During this ordeal Frau Wagner bore herself with exemplary dignity. Unlike so many erstwhile supporters of the Third Reich, she never tried to deny her political past. "I thought it was for the best," she is reported to have said. "But I made a mistake." If more of her compatriots had found the courage and frankness to say likewise, the political atmosphere of the Federal Republic might today be a good deal healthier.

[2] Geoffrey Skelton, *Wagner at Bayreuth* (Barrie and Rockliff, 1965).

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

developed visual sense. In any case, before the new régime was firmly in the saddle, the Nazis had seized power and for all their loud-mouthed talk about German art they had little to offer in this field beyond the conventional prejudices of their *Spiessbürger* supporters ("a man who paints a blue horse must be mad") and an ill-defined *Volkstümlichkeit*.

In fact Tietjen's monumental productions seem to have pleased them well enough, and the sets of his distinguished designer, Emil Praetorius, now carry a strong flavour of the times. The pedantic naturalism of the '80s disappeared, the foliage grew less obsessively detailed, but the modest stylisation of the gabled roofs of old Nuremberg in his 1933 sets for *Die Meistersinger* irresistibly recalls the sort of frescoes that subsequently became popular in the *Gaststuben* of South German hotels. As Praetorius later explained in *Wagner: Bild und Vision*, what he was after was an avoidance of naturalistic detail that nonetheless preserved a "certain nearness-to-nature." It is a compromise on which countless Wagner settings have foundered.

In the conditions of the Third Reich no one could have conducted the thoroughgoing renovation that Bayreuth needed, but it is hardly probable that Winifred Wagner, Tietjen and Praetorius ever had anything of the sort in mind. As a result, when in 1945 the outside world finally broke into the mausoleum, the old order crumbled away like a mummy exposed to the air. Politically disreputable and artistically bankrupt, it had nothing to pit against a hostile world. Unnaturally protected for over sixty years against the sort of reinterpretation and rebirth all art undergoes as one generation succeeds another, the Bayreuth Festival had no means of challenging a widespread belief that Wagner's art was essentially a period manifestation, a temporary extravagance of the spirit that had nothing to offer the mid-twentieth century.

OF COURSE Wagner was too immense a figure simply to be swept under the table like some German d'Annunzio, and so it became the thing to rescue Wagner the musician by casting off Wagner the dramatist. His ridiculous plots of Nordic gods were to be taken no more seriously than his dogmatic utterances on a thousand and one topics from vegetarianism to the Jews. Only the music redeemed a drama as rambling, repetitive and irrational as *The Ring*. In a period of reaction from the whole notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, such suggestions fell on fertile soil. Musicians have a curious way of resenting any extra-musical intrusion into their art, and here at last was a chance to expel all those tiresome and irrelevant factors that Wagner had introduced into his music; all that ill-digested philosophy and political theorising could at last be sent packing, and the essential, the music, would shine forth in new splendour. Even so profound a Wagnerian as Ernest Newman unwittingly lent support to this view by demonstrating that the music dramas were not, as Wagner himself liked to suppose, musical illustrations of a pre-conceived drama, but rather dramatic realisations of a musical idea.

It says much for Wieland Wagner that even in the years of adversity after the war he never sought to rescue his grandfather's music by consigning the rest of his genius to the dustbin. Like Thomas Mann, he realised that "as a poet Wagner was a musician; as a musician he was a poet." Like it or not, the dramatic content of a work like *The Ring* is an essential component of its greatness.

And, of course, the western world does not like it, for *The Ring* (and here again I must quote Mann) is basically "against civilisation." It proposes a view of life that cuts across and profoundly offends every tenet of the rationalist humanism that has dominated Europe since the Renaissance. Indeed, it is perhaps the supreme artistic expression of that sustained German assault on liberal values that embraces Marx (in certain aspects of his thinking) as well as Nietzsche, Freud, and even Mann himself. It is no good pretending that *The Ring* is about loving-kindness, merely because that heavenly theme commonly known as "Redemption by Love" soars, with startling irrelevance, over the closing bars of *Götterdämmerung* as the world dissolves into fire and water.

Part of the essential quality of *The Ring* lies in its very amorality. At the flood-tide of bourgeois, industrialised Europe, when civic order and material progress seemed to have triumphed over violence and anarchy as completely as the pavements of its great cities had triumphed over the earth that lay beneath them, Wagner (and this was of course what drew Nietzsche to Bayreuth) peered into the lawless abyss that underlay this cocky and self-confident civilisation. In four evenings he showed the beginning and end of a world; he showed how life climbed laboriously out of the primordial slime, how by force and cunning a world was built, only to be destroyed by the very instruments that had brought it into existence. In a period when reason claimed to have plotted a firm geography of the mind, Wagner took the lid off the seething cauldron that underlay it. As young Siegfried rests in the forest musing on his origins, his thoughts of his mother are inseparably entwined with his awakening eroticism, just as in *Parsifal* Kundry seduces the chaste hero by identifying herself with his dead mother. "A mother's

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kiss," she cries, but the orchestra and Parsifal's cry tell us that it is no such thing. How grossly improper by nineteenth-century standards, how startlingly post-Freudian are such moments in Wagner. So, too, is the fact that Alberich's power to forge the Ring stems from his forswearance of love, for do not fearful energies derive from sexual inhibition? If one face of *The Ring* is atavistic myth the other is depth psychology, and in neither case is the world it presents domesticated or civilised. When in *The Ring at Bayreuth* (1966) Sir Victor Gollancz complained of Wagner's partially fascist make-up, he was perhaps guilty of a *post ergo propter* over-simplification. But by the standards of his Judeo-Christian humanitarianism he was quite right to find *The Ring* offensive. It is meant to be.

IT IS PRECISELY this frighteningly disruptive mixture of myth and psychology in Wagner's works that Wieland Wagner's productions set out to emphasise, and from it they derived their power. To suggest, as some of his critics have done, that they were nothing but a modish attempt to make Wagner palatable to the mid-twentieth century by rigging him out in a modernistic veneer is the reverse of the truth. Wieland Wagner made many miscalculations and he cannot be acquitted of occasional silliness and even downright perversity. But his bare and severely stylised productions had one overriding merit. They strip away the cosy naturalism that made it possible to regard *The Ring* as nothing but a remote fairy tale whose repetitive *longueurs* are redeemed by some splendid music. They reveal the terrible relevance of Wagner's dramas to an epoch in which the thin crust of civilisation is so manifestly under strain.

That was certainly not the path to easy acceptance, and indeed these productions have trodden on many toes. Unlike the average theatre-goer, who welcomes a new conception of an old work, or is at least willing to give it a hearing, opera-goers are apt to grow fixed on the mechanical reproduction of detail. Of no breed is this truer than of the old Wagnerian, who likes to regard himself as the guardian of the grail and reacts to the least deviation from Wagner's stage instructions with all the fury of a theologian stamping out heresy. As long ago as the '20s that old scorpion Hans Pfitzner was furiously inveighing against Bayreuth's lack of *Werktreue*. What a mercy he did not survive to visit the New Bayreuth!

Behind this rigid traditionalism lies a belief that the creative artist is the final authority on everything that concerns his work. It is a curious assumption, for no one supposes that an autobiography contains the ultimate truth about its subject. If Freud had done nothing else, one might hope that he had at least indicated the bottomless depths of human self-deception. And if this is true of what a man says about his life, how much truer is it of what he says about his art, which springs out of the most mysterious recesses of the human personality? What an artist tells us of his art is, of course, always of interest. But there is no reason to take it as final.

THIS IS PARTICULARLY true of Wagner's stage directions. In the half century that lies between *Rienzi* and *Parsifal* his style underwent a prodigious evolution. On his own back he carried music from the early romantic world of Weber to the very threshold of Schoenberg and atonality. From the naturalistic and historicising grand opera of his youth he entered the world of myth at a level Western music had not previously known. (Eighteenth-century *opera seria* took mythical plots, but in the age of Winckelmann rarely got further than treating them as a decorative classical frieze.) It was a prodigious achievement, but it would be too much to expect an equivalent degree of originality in every aspect of his vast creations. Visually, Wagner remained rooted in the naturalism of his youth. As he himself recognised, he had little visual sense. "It seems that my eyes are not enough for me to take in the world," he wrote to Frau Wesendonck. During his year in Paris as a young man, he never once visited the Louvre, and when in old age Renoir came to paint that remarkable but unflattering portrait, Wagner had no real idea who the man was or what he stood for. In visual matters Wagner remained a child of his time. That is why his stage instructions for *Die Meistersinger*, which alone among his later works is rooted in his early naturalism, are perfectly adequate, while those for *Tristan, Parsifal*, and *The Ring*, even if one regards them as descriptions of what swept before his mind's eye rather than precise and practical instructions, seem to say at once too much and too little. *Die Meistersinger* had its feet planted firmly in the Franconian earth of Nuremberg. But to what extent can it be said that the third act of *Tristan* is bound to Cornwall or *Parsifal* to the mountains behind Barcelona? And where on earth does *The Ring* take place?

All these music dramas have left the naturalistic world far behind, and an attempt to impose it on them leads to a curious discrepancy that was well described by Adolphe Appia, who was such a crucial influence on Wieland Wagner, after his visits to Bayreuth in 1882 and 1888.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> A living thing is being presented in an atmosphere without life. . . . The drama, which is all shadow and light, violent contrasts and infinite shades of meaning, is projected against a monotonous background. . . . The horrible discrepancy offends our receptive apparatus, but unfortunately it affects the drama as well, in particular the music, the impact of which is either distorted or weakened by the absence of corresponding effects of light.

LIGHT, that above all else, was what Appia was after. And light, too, was the primary quality in Wieland Wagner's productions, the element that gave him the means of mirroring on the stage that uniquely flexible, subtle instrument that his grandfather forged out of the orchestra and the symphonic development of *Leitmotiven*. It is an element that the grandson handled with wonderful virtuosity and imagination, and those who have not had the good fortune to see his productions on his home ground can have little notion of the effects he achieved. In this, the *Festspielhaus* itself plays an essential part. The sunken orchestral pit not only spares one the balletic distraction of a conductor, it also removes the barrage of orchestral lights through which most operatic productions are seen. At Bayreuth there is nothing but a subdued glow between the stage and the amphitheatrical auditorium. (One of the most marvellous moments comes when the lights are lowered and, because the conductor cannot be seen to raise his baton and no one knows the precise instant at which the music will start, a profound and expectant silence falls over the house. To hear the opening bars of *Tristan* or *Das Rheingold* emerge out of this silence, this nothingness, is an experience no other theatre can offer.) As a result, every modulation in the lighting strikes home with exceptional intensity. I recall in particular the rapid fall of darkness after Siegfried's death, as the vassals in silhouette silently carry his body from that fatal hunting expedition.

The other basic element in Wieland Wagner's productions was a later development. It consisted of huge sculptural forms, at once archaic and symbolic. More and more of his sets came to be dominated by one single object that seemed to be derived in equal part from primitive and modern art (Henry Moore was clearly an influence). On occasions the result was mannered, arbitrary and even irrelevant. But at its best it was capable of effects that cut through detail to the very core of what Wagner was striving to express. For instance, the huge phallic totem pole that broods over the second act of his last production of *Tristan* is at once a watch tower from which Brangäne calls her warnings and an archetypal sentinel of the libido that presides over the most total realisation of eroticism that Western art has achieved. It does justice to the minimum outer necessities of the drama and yet it illuminates its essence. If Wieland Wagner had done nothing else, his handling of this act, in which the lovers seem to become disembodied and float on a purple light, would be enough to establish his stature as a producer.

BUT THERE ARE clearly risks in a style of production that so ruthlessly sweeps everything off the stage except for bare essentials, for it raises the crucial question: what *is* essential? Although I said earlier that Wagner's mature operas (always with the exception of *Die Meistersinger*) transcend the naturalism of his earlier works, it cannot be denied that a score like *The Ring* nonetheless contains a wealth of naturalist detail. This Wieland Wagner was apt to brush aside with the comment that it is not necessary to reproduce on the stage everything that occurs in the orchestral pit. True enough, the pedantic underlining of every orchestral gesture can easily lead to the fidgety fussiness that marred some of Carl Ebert's later productions at Glyndebourne. But the issue cannot so easily be swept aside. The second act of *Siegfried*, for instance, breathes the air of a huge forest. The music evokes mossy banks and rivulets, towering trees and rocky caves. Admittedly it is only a background to the essential action of the myth. But all this natural enchantment surely demands some reflection on the stage beyond the quasi-abstract screen (pterodactyls locked in mortal combat?) which is all that Bayreuth offers. One of Wieland Wagner's most persistent weaknesses as a designer was a failure to convey a natural as opposed to a man-made world.

It may be objected that in any style of production some aspect or other of a work as many-sided and complex as *The Ring* is liable to be sacrificed. That may be so. But when Wieland Wagner imposed his archetypal theatre, as it is often called in Germany, on his grandfather's early works, the losses were apt to outweigh the gains. A work like *Tannhäuser* is overwhelmingly conceived in terms of romantic grand opera, even if it now and again breaks out of this framework, notably in the scene of the hero's return from Rome. But if Tannhäuser himself seems a forerunner of Amfortas as an archetypal representation of the guilt-racked sensualist, the world in which he lives and acts is distinctly historical: this is Germany in the early middle ages. Wieland Wagner's production in the '50s drove home Tannhäuser's psychological tensions with unusual power, but it did so at the cost of riding rough-shod over the remainder of the opera.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IF THE UNEQUAL development of Wagner's genius makes *Tannhäuser* a borderline case, in which the gains and losses are not easy to assess, the same cannot be said of *Die Meistersinger*, where Wagner, at the summit of his powers, deliberately and systematically conceived the work as a naturalistic opera. To impose stylisation here is merely wilful. In a production in the mid-'50s that otherwise kept its feet on the ground of reality, Wieland Wagner simply swept the streets of Nuremberg off the stage. As I recall it, we were left in the second act with some large stylised blooms that were doubtless intended to evoke the smell of lilac, even if they in fact resembled rhododendron. I cannot conceive how anyone not well acquainted with the opera could have followed the complicated comings-and-goings between Hans Sachs' and Pogner's (non-existent) houses. Doubtless Wieland Wagner dismissed the fragrant, moonlit magic of that midsummer's eve, which makes this act one of the most enchanting in all opera, as *kitsch*. At all events the enchantment was conspicuously absent.

Encouraged by this breakthrough Wieland really went to town in his 1963 production. Perhaps he still bore the scars of a wartime *Meistersinger*, for which he designed the sets, and wished to exorcise the memory of it. I am all in sympathy with his determination to minimise the chauvinist overtones that still make the work such a favourite with the German *Spiesser*. But to substitute for Nuremberg as Wagner conceived it, Nuremberg "as it really was" in Sachs' time, to put the whole opera in the totally irrelevant framework of a Shakespearian theatre with equally irrelevant genuflections before Brecht, is to defy the spirit in which the work was conceived, is indeed in one sense to lapse into a pedantic naturalism that he elsewhere condemned. The nightwatchman was a drunk, the Mastersingers were oafs, the *Volksfest* in the finale was mercilessly guyed. What stupid, vulgar, self-satisfied little people these are, Wieland seemed to say. How could you allow your breast to swell in pride at so brash a spectacle? Such a *Verfremdungseffekt* would have been fine, had the opera been written, not by Wagner, but by Brecht. Yet in the end it was not the production that sent up the work, but the warmth, nobility and richness of the music that made the production seem perverse and wilful.

EVEN IN THE mythical operas, Wieland Wagner often seemed a prey to this wilfulness. If you clear the stage of naturalistic clobber so as to focus attention on a few crucial properties, to which you attach symbolic meaning by virtue of their power to summon images and associations out of the unconscious, then it is as well to be clear that you are playing with fire. You have in effect unloosed strange powers and it behoves you to handle them with due care, for magic has a disturbing ability to run amok. The Sword is clearly one of these magic properties. It is the symbol, first of Siegmund's and later of Siegfried's manhood, it is the instrument of a new order that is first shattered by the old order of the Spear, but in Siegfried's hands eventually destroys that symbol of Wotan's power. Yet how carelessly Wieland Wagner handled this magic weapon in his 1965 production of *The Ring*. At the end of the first act of *Die Walküre* Siegmund rushed out into the forest with Sieglinde and left the Sword he had so recently and significantly acquired lying on the ground. In terms of mere utilitarian prudence it is incomprehensible. In view of all that that Sword stands for, of its crucial function at almost every turn of the epic, the mere sight of it lying unheeded disrupted every assumption on which the production is built. Alberich might as well forget to put on the Ring.

Unfortunately this was not an isolated incident. At the end of the second act, as Brünnhilde hustles Sieglinde off stage, the broken remains of the sword were again left neglected on the ground, though by the third act Brünnhilde had somehow or other recovered them. In the first scene of *Das Rheingold* Alberich was never seen to snatch the gold. At the end of the second act of *Götterdämmerung* Siegfried and Gutrune failed to reappear though the music clearly announces their entry. And, needless to say, by the last act Siegfried had once again mislaid that sword.

These were sins of omission. There were also sins of commission that seemed to fly in the face not merely of Wagner's own directions (as I have already suggested, that may in certain circumstances be justifiable) but of the very essence of the drama and the music. At the end of *Das Rheingold* the Gods, instead of entering Walhalla, which towers over the stage, made their way, as it were, downhill in the direction from which the Rhine Maidens' lament has been heard. (An unversed Wagnerian might well suppose they were going for a dip in the Rhine.) In his book Victor Gollancz relates how Wieland Wagner intended here to indicate that, though the Gods may think that they are mounting to security, they are in fact descending to destruction. Gollancz rightly dismissed this glib explanation as "grotesque", for Wagner himself had already provided a fully adequate means of indicating what is "really" happening: as the Gods prepare their entry into the fortress for which they have paid so fatal a price, Loge comes down stage and explains that they are in

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fact journeying to disaster, and that he, for one, does not intend to join them. On the other hand, at a point in the drama where a physical sense of downward motion *is* clearly called for, in the descent into Niebelheim, Wieland Wagner was content simply to ring down the curtain.

THESE ARE only a few examples of his uncertain handling of crucial detail. But to them must be added a charge on another count: during Wieland Wagner's reign at Bayreuth the music itself rarely seemed as thoroughly prepared as the visual side of the performances. In part this was no doubt due to the internal balance of power in an institution where the senior partner was the main producer. In part it was also due to his failure to attract and retain the services of the outstanding conductors of his own generation, who might have been more sympathetic to his own approach than the old school. By a cruel irony it was only at the very end of his life that he seemed to have found in Pierre Boulez (who greatly admired him) both a true collaborator and a conductor of the first order. But by the time Boulez reached Bayreuth to conduct last year's *Parsifal*, Wieland Wagner was already mortally ill in a Munich hospital.

In fact almost all the most musically distinguished performances at post-war Bayreuth were conducted by that unbending pillar of musical conservatism, Hans Knappertsbusch, whose name is now rightly inscribed in the Walhalla of great Wagnerian conductors. His *Parsifal*, in particular, was memorable for its quality of monumental pathos and no doubt Wieland Wagner was intelligent enough to respect it for what it was. But no one could claim that it bore much inner relationship to what he was striving to achieve on the stage.

ON BOTH DRAMATIC AND MUSICAL counts, then, there is a good deal to be said in criticism of Wieland Wagner's régime at Bayreuth. In fact, he was officially co-regent with his younger brother, but Wolfgang Wagner has in recent years largely devoted himself to the administrative side of the festival. Nonetheless, he achieved what fifteen years ago seemed an impossible task: he re-established his grandfather not merely as a great composer (that was not really in question even at the height of the anti-Wagnerian reaction) but as perhaps the most prodigious and many-sided dramatist since Shakespeare. And he did it by virtue of productions that stripped aside what is peripheral in those vast music-dramas so as better to expose the profound layers of meaning that lie beneath.

IT CAN BE embarrassingly hard to put one's finger on precisely where and in what those profound meanings lie. Whenever one finds oneself trapped in the jostle of an interval into trying to elucidate the significance of some detail or other in *The Ring*, whatever one says is apt to sound impossibly naïve or confused. Again and again, the essence of the matter escapes one: it is as though one were trying to pin down a dream that eludes definition. Wagner himself was well aware of this. To his friend Röckel he wrote, "It is wrong of you to challenge me to explain [*The Ring*] in words.... You must feel that something is being enacted that is *not to be expressed in mere words.*" (My italics.) And indeed when one takes the drama on a purely textual level, how hyperbolic, repetitive, contradictory, confused and long-winded it is, and how absurd its phoney-archaic, "quoth-he" language. Yet at considerable cost in time, cash and energy one returns again and again for four evenings, three of them long beyond endurance, to listen to a drama one cannot plausibly explain. No wonder Wagner is the object of so much scepticism and mockery.

The obvious answer to this paradox is that one undergoes the marathon for the sake of the music. Yet this is only a partial truth. The essential fascination of successful performances of *Tristan, Die Meistersinger, The Ring* and *Parsifal* is not that one has heard something beautiful, but that one has witnessed, or even partaken of, something of immense significance. It is as though the music had enabled one to enter a submerged world, call it archaic, archetypal, symbolic, subconscious or what you will, but a world where the profoundest human desires, fears, hatreds and longings lie buried. That, I believe, is why it is so difficult to give a coherent account of what *The Ring* is about, why Wagner so often arouses such intense and irrational hostility (the subconscious has its reasons of which the mind knows nothing, and, in particular, good reasons for resenting any intrusion on its privacy). It explains why, when the music fails to stir one, the boredom is so unutterable. It explains why Wagner is so often accused of amorality, for his music does in fact sink shafts to levels of experience that are "beyond good and evil." Debussy was right to refer to him as "old Klingsor," for he is in some mysterious way a magician, a fallen angel, gifted with miraculous powers.

IT CAN, OF COURSE, be argued that all art of any potency has this "magical" ability to touch our being below the level of the conscious mind. Indeed, it could be said to be an essential precondition of great art. Yet Wagner seems to have these powers to a quite exceptional

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

degree, so that *The Ring*'s outer structure is like some volcanic region that has been contorted into unwieldy and improbable shapes by the pressure of, as Wagner himself put it, "the reservoir of terrible and noble things" that lie below its surface. In *The Death of Tragedy* (1961) George Steiner suggests that Wagner intended his music to "rebuild the bridges between intellect and faith torn down by the shallow vehemence of post-Newtonian rationalism." I see what Mr. Steiner means, though I do not myself believe that Wagner gave a fig for faith. I would like to rephrase his idea and suggest that Wagner's music dramas are one of the most formidable bridges that the half-submerged irrational world has thrown across to the discursive intellect in this post-Newtonian age. That is why so many "enlightened" intellectuals resent and disapprove of them. If rationalism is the hallmark of civilisation and enlightenment, then Wagner is the enemy of both.

To those who would dismiss this as just one more expression of the mumbo-jumbo that has always surrounded Wagner and his music, I recommend Robert Donington's fascinating study, *Wagner's "Ring" and Its Symbols* (1962). Mr. Donington is a Jungian. Occasionally his insights are marred by the jargon of his persuasion, and there are moments when a Freudian might prefer much crisper analyses than he offers. But what lifts the book above the level of speculation is that Mr. Donington backs his analysis up to the hilt with musical examples. Where he suggests a connection between psychological ideas, he is able to point to thematic links that underlie it. In other words, he uncovers a musical structure that not only parallels his psychological analysis but is its instrument of communication. Ancient philosophers believed that music was the reflection of "a harmony of the spheres." Mr. Donington's book suggests it can be an expression of the strange shapes and forbidden thoughts that swim like the Rhine Maidens in the archetypal flood of the subconscious.

OF COURSE Wagner did not consciously plan these connections: he did not take a motive and say it "stands for" this, that or the other unconscious image. But I recently came across interesting evidence that these correspondences between symbol and music are not a matter of mere fantasy or speculation. In last year's Bayreuth programme Curt von Westernhagen relates how in nine weeks at the end of 1853 Wagner wrote the whole composition sketch of *Das Rheingold*, so that in musical shorthand the work stood in almost every particular as we now hear it. Only the prelude, the origin of the whole drama, remained incomplete. And yet in La Spezia earlier that autumn Wagner had already dreamed "of sinking into strongly flowing water" which seemed like the long sustained figuration of an E flat major chord. There he had it, a perfect naturalistic embodiment of the Rhine, out of which the drama was to emerge. And yet, even when the whole composition of *Das Rheingold* was complete in all essentials, he still could not relate that description of water to the drama that was to emerge from it. It was only subsequently that he found in a theme associated with Erda the missing link he was unconsciously seeking.

But why Erda? She was not to appear until the last scene of *Das Rheingold*. What possible relevance could she have at this moment, when the stage is inhabited only by the waters of the Rhine? Clearly the libretto offers no clue. Clearly also those analysts who persist in regarding the *Leitmotiven* as nothing but "visiting cards", as Debussy in a peculiarly imperceptive moment described them, have no explanation to offer. But if one accepts Donington's analysis, the reason why Wagner needed this particular theme (which, as Ernest Newman pointed out without apparently grasping its significance, contains the intermediate notes of the E flat major scale omitted from the original triad) to link the basic idea of the prelude with the drama that grows out of it, at once becomes clear. For Erda is the mother of all animate life, and her presence there denotes the emergence of consciousness out of inanimate nature, just as at the end of the tetralogy her theme in inversion, in which form it is generally known as "the Downfall of the Gods", denotes the return of animate life to the element out of which it had so painfully clambered. Without her the drama could not begin.

"Mark my new poem well", Wagner wrote to Liszt, "it holds the world's beginning and its destruction." But the imaginative insight is not rational and literary; it is symbolic and musical. And for all their mistakes and failings on points of detail, this essential truth is embodied in Wieland Wagner's best productions with an intensity that no others can in my experience equal.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTES & TOPICS

The Talk at the Next Table

READING Harold Rosenberg's article ["Where to Begin," ENCOUNTER, March] was, for me, a bit like eating in a restaurant when the talk at the next table sounds (from the snatches one hears) to be much more interesting than the talk at one's own. It's hard to repress a start of envy, for example, when the university is spoken of so confidently as "the training ground of artists." Here in England, art schools manage to exist in an enclave of their own. Nor is provincialism, with us, to be thought of simply as the result of "physical dispersion." It seems to be built in to the national culture.

Despite these differences, however, Mr. Rosenberg seems to be concerned with certain problems which also bother me increasingly. I don't find his suggested answers very satisfactory, but then I can say the same about my own. Let me point to two things which Mr. Rosenberg says in his article, which, if they do not entirely contradict one another, at least serve to highlight one of the basic difficulties. He begins by asserting that:

> Teaching art means educating students, regardless of age, in the processes employed by artists in producing their works; in their attitudes towards their materials; in the character of *their* visual experience (not the visual-perception experiments of the psychologists), including their experience of works of art; in the necessity for and the limits of imitation.

A little later on, however, he has shifted his ground.

> Today, the craft approach to art is reactionary and out of touch with the actual modes and functions of 20th-century art. In the past a student could be introduced to the national or regional tradition by learning studio or workshop procedures. In our time art is involved with ideas; it is a creation of the mind as well as of the hand. In order to deal with living art, the university must find the means to overcome the drift towards reducing art to a system of measurable skills.

Let me cap these two quotations with a single question: under present circumstances, can art be taught at all?

Even the simplest part of Mr. Rosenberg's prescription—the teaching of processes—hides a trap. For how, precisely, do you teach them, except by the old craft method? And how do you see to it that this technical training doesn't become a much more insidious kind of stylistic influence? The materials and techniques of the artist—the conventional ones—are relatively simple, and it's easy enough to instruct someone in the first principles of their use: how to lay on oil paint, how to use a claw-chisel. But any stage after this already begins to involve the teacher and the student in stylistic decisions, imposed by the one on the other. And this runs clean contrary to the whole aesthetic of contemporary art.

The truth is that art has now become so introverted that the "predictable result" is, by the standards of most of us, the bad result, and any system designed to produce it must necessarily be wrong. What, then, can be done?

The demands of our society see to it that the teaching of art has to be bureaucratised with the rest. There has to be some kind of framework; some method of measuring the results obtained. At the same time, from the point of view of someone who wants to learn to be an artist, the greatest need is to be set free from outside demands and pressures. The artist is trying to get at some inner truth—it's the business of the art school to provide him with a favourable environment in which to do this: here, I think, is a kind of thing which many go-ahead teachers of art would say. Into the art-school, the potential painter or sculptor carries, for the most part, simply a burden of mannerisms and of bad habits—the things he has been taught to begin with. Most art-schools, I think, feel that it's a very good thing that art occupies so small a place in the normal curriculum of English education. Certainly, with many more applicants than places, they find it hard to make up their minds who deserves entry. Since there is no agreed standard, the young hopefuls come before them with anything from a pencil drawing of a plaster-cast to an imitation of Jackson Pollock. They choose as best they can, but more, I suspect, on the basis of interview than on that of the work submitted. The question is, really, one of whether this situation can be changed very much. If "inner truth" is the aim, it's hard to see what the school art-teacher can hope to do, during the few hours a week allotted to him, to prepare his pupils for higher things.

BUT, AT THIS POINT, let me make an immense leap, and talk about the art student, and what happens to him after his training is finished. Perhaps I am naïve, but the "progressive" art-schools I have seen in England always fill me with pure envy. There is, of course, the question of getting a diploma or certificate of some

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kind at the end of the course—but when everything seems to conspire to push this thought aside, what eighteen- or twenty-year-old is going to worry? The grant-aided student at a school of this sort—the student in the fine arts departments—finds that he is being paid by the state, though not very handsomely, to liberate his creative faculties. What could be nicer? Responsibilities he has not yet acquired; the cult of the "young artist" means he can afford to feel a genial contempt for those members of the staff whom he doesn't happen to get on with. His perspective stretches no further than those students of a year ago, or two years ago, who have already landed themselves not too onerous teaching-jobs in London, and perhaps, even a contract with a dealer. The remoter gods speak to him from the pages of *Art International*.

It would be nice to think that the effects of all this are perfectly disastrous. I must confess that they don't seem to be. Art schools of a progressive kind seem to house a great deal of creative talent. A recent exhibition, held at the I.C.A., of work from the Coventry City College of Art, had a didactic purpose. It was meant to show how students moved through free, exploratory drawing, towards finding a personal idiom. Many of the drawings were beautiful; so were a handful of pictures shown with them. A visit I paid to Coventry confirmed that the exhibition had been selected from strength. But what happens to all these bright young people, once they leave the sheltering environment which an art-school like Coventry provides? Nearly all the art-teachers in institutions of this kind tend to confirm my guess—that each generation of young artists withers with extraordinary rapidity. Marriage, children, and teaching are the bitch goddesses where the promising young painter or sculptor is concerned.

Nothing much can be done about marriage and children (at least, not by me, in these pages). It remains, therefore, to consider the question of teaching—which more or less brings me back to where I started. If we consider the practical purpose of art-education in England, we soon discover that its real job is still to produce, not artists, but teachers of art. Art remains firmly locked within an educational framework. The situation is likely to get worse as the competition for "good" teaching jobs gets fiercer. The output from our art-schools, in fact, is beginning to catch up with the demand for qualified teachers. It long ago overtook the demand for professional painters and sculptors. If it wasn't for teaching, the graduates of our leading art-schools would probably be as poorly off as the graduates of our leading drama-schools.

And this brings me to a real and important difference between art-education in America and in Britain. It's hard to argue on level terms with Mr. Rosenberg because the situation isn't the same. He worries about the association between the artist and the university because he feels that there's a danger of art becoming academic. I've tried to show that the more adventurous British art-schools are, in fact, in full retreat from academic procedures. Why, then, my remarks about bureaucratisation? The answer is, paradoxically enough, that English art-schools are not part of the framework of university education, but of technical education, which is peculiarly subject to bureaucratic pressure. Worse still, it tends to falsify the relationships: to create the wrong kind of expectation. These free communities I've been talking about are nevertheless busy training their students *for* something. But for what? In the design departments, the answer is obvious to everyone. In the fine art departments, the question might seem to be in the worst of taste. The "training" the young artist has received by the time he graduates leads him precisely to the point of self-doubt. Things, it seems, will never be quite so good again. The one thing he can do is to turn tail and go right back to school—as a teacher instead of as a student. It is what the bureaucrats expect. And it's the only financial solution open to him too. The community has taught the painter or sculptor to produce something which it doesn't want, and has inculcated attitudes which run almost entirely counter to those held by its other members. The gaudy little flock of successful young artists that one sees around the London galleries looks jolly enough—what about the hundreds of less successful ones elsewhere?

THE REASON WHY the conversation at the next table rivets me is this: that Mr. Rosenberg seems to be able to assume that art really has a place, however precariously established, in the American community. This enables him to start worrying about the teaching given in grade schools, and the fact that art-class often consists of no more than cutting up paper for Hallowe'en decorations, and the fact that many art teachers are inadequately trained. In England, we have an increasing flood of "qualified" teachers. But I'm back at square one, wondering if the creative artist really has a place in English society at all.

Edward Lucie-Smith

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

East Wind, West Wind

Chinese Students in Cardiff — By DONALD THOMAS

SOME weeks ago, while the television news-reader was describing the departure of Chinese students from London airport, bound for Peking via Moscow, I looked up and saw a dozen familiar faces moving across the screen. These students were the "post-graduates" whom I had been teaching in Cardiff until several months before, at which point they had left without taking any qualifying examination, apparently on the grounds that examinations rate some people as better than others and are therefore "undemocratic." The last I had heard from them was a polite farewell on a coloured postcard of the Peking Language Institute, and I imagined that they must have left at once for home and the Cultural Revolution. Apparently not. But no doubt, said the news-reader, they had gone to join the Cultural Revolution now. Better late than never. In the departure lounge they showed that, though absent from Peking for the past two years, the celestial radiance of Chairman Mao, "Brighter and redder than any sun," shone also down on them. They chanted loyal, revolutionary slogans, brandishing their pocket editions of the great red banner of Mao's invincible thought at a sadly unreceptive audience from Scotland Yard's Special Branch. Seeing that they would be in Peking in a matter of days or hours, and that their compatriots had come to blows with Soviet revisionists outside the Lenin mausoleum, they could hardly have done less.

Perhaps it was a deliberate act of Chinese policy to make these students appear so curiously bourgeois during their stay in Britain. They certainly looked like the last people to be seen —alive or dead—on the barricades. They seemed to have been fitted out by Austin Reed, shod by Freeman, Hardy and Willis, with just a hint of Carnaby Street about the ties. Every day they bought and read either the *Times* or the *Guardian*, sometimes the *Spectator* or the *New Statesman*. Apparently, they did not find time for the *Daily Worker*/*Morning Star* or even for a non-Communist left-wing paper like *Tribune*. Of course they wanted to perfect their English and they saw more chance of doing this through the style of the *Times* or the *Guardian* than through the *Worker*. But apart from that they probably found the blatant capitalist sympathies of the first two papers less irritating than what they would regard as the revisionism of the *Worker*. I recall that the only time during our year's association when their anger reached a climax of flushed faces and desk-thumping was after an Indian student had referred to the "excesses of Stalin" and, when the Chinese inquired what these "excesses" might be, I suggested they were probably those mentioned by Khrushchev. It was the word "Khrushchev" that started the trouble and, I felt, I might have mentioned President Johnson, General MacArthur, or even Chiang Kai-shek without producing anything like the reaction. They loudly insisted that Khrushchev was "a dirty revisionist" and "a traitor to the Soviet people." By contrast, their attitude to America was one of mere derision.. When we read some of Alistair Cooke's *Letters from America*, they began to smile broadly, the smiles grew to giggles and, in some cases to helpless laughter. They did not just disapprove of American society, they found it ridiculous, a raree-show for the socialist world. Perhaps they could afford to smile, since Chairman Mao had told them that the United States was no more than a paper tiger; there was far more danger in the revisionist ideology of Khrushchev and his successors. If these students received any indoctrination before they left China, to ensure that they returned home intact at the end of their two years, I felt quite sure that they had been armed against the seductive wiles of revisionism rather than against the allure of capitalist society.

THIS PARTICULAR GROUP of students was less inhibited than some of its predecessors. They did not choose to go everywhere or do everything together nor, for that matter, did they live under one roof. At the same time, you would be unlikely to meet a solitary Chinese anywhere. It required no great perception to see that Mao's instructions on the organisation of cadres had not been lost on them. "To work out ideas" and "to put ideas into practice" being the functions of two members of a cadre, it seemed natural to find a very able, if reticent, intellectual leader (who usually became their spokesman in an argument, if the going got tough) and a rather uneasy associate who gave the impression of a drill instructor trapped in a drawing room.

At first there was a reluctance on the part of

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

these students to discuss anything which they felt was "political," possibly because they believed they could not do this without giving offence. When at last this barrier was removed to the extent of exchanging opinions, their attitude remained, "We know we shall never convince you and you must never expect to convince us." Unfortunately, perhaps because what seemed non-political in England had political implications in China, this rigid attitude made even certain "negotiations" about day-to-day routine extremely difficult. To persuade them that it was necessary to fill in a particular form or choose which part of the course they would specialise in or which papers in the examination—if any—they proposed to take, was an extremely unrewarding process. If they found it inexpedient they would simply decline to put pen to paper or make any kind of choice. No amount of explanation of the administrative chaos or inconvenience which would follow had the least effect. Of course, the result of this kind of confrontation is almost inevitably to make both sides equally inflexible. What took place in the end was not so much "negotiation" as the presentation of a *fait accompli*; the important thing was to start off in a position from which you could get your own way simply by refusing to budge during any discussion of the situation. There is no point, it seems, in sitting down to negotiate unless you are so well placed that the failure of negotiations will make no real difference to you. In other respects, though, the Chinese were admirable students, capable of an intensity and thoroughness of work which make almost all their English contemporaries seem less than half-hearted and which ought to induce nightmares in those who regard China as the great scientific or economic menace to world stability in the not too distant future. Their attitude towards work was one of Puritan dedication.

NOW THAT the Cultural Revolution has run at least a good part of its course, it is easier to see how much these particular students were the products of that freer intellectual climate which prevailed in China during the later 1950s and particularly of Mao's *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People* (1957). ("Letting a hundred flowers blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend is the policy for promoting the progress of the arts and the sciences and a flourishing socialist culture in our land.") Their debt to such works became very clear when we discussed some of those classic English statements of liberty like Acton's "All power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely," or Mill's "If all mankind, minus one, were of one opinion...." Mill, they said, was absolutely right in believing that the one dissident voice should not be silenced. No man, however erroneous his political opinions, should be forcibly silenced, though neither should he be allowed to hold those opinions unchallenged. Attempts should be made to persuade him of his errors, as was the custom in China; but however much he might remain unpersuaded he should never be arbitrarily silenced. Of course the process of persuasion might go on indefinitely, if the man held out in his heresy and, no doubt, he would see reason in the end. They knew of no case in China in which a man had not voluntarily repudiated his errors in the end. It would be easy to dismiss their argument as naïve or cynical, but it follows the precise line advocated by Mao in his attacks on "commandism" and "coercion" during this same period of greater intellectual freedom. So far as Lord Acton's remark was concerned, they explained that all power belonged to the people and if a leader became corrupt the people would see to it that he was no longer their leader. Yet "the people" was not synonymous with "the population" or "the electorate." The people were those who supported the people's democracy, while the population must include those who were indifferent to such a democracy, and even those who were "enemies of the people." Power was not to be shared with such reactionaries as these. This, too, stems from Mao's *Correct Handling of Contradictions*. Indeed, even among the disciples of the new intellectual liberty in China, the debt to Mao's writings went far beyond this. The futility of theory without practice, one of his favourite themes, appeared in such guises as one student's remark, "You should combine theory with practice so that you can become a helpful intellectual." This appeared in isolation, what was to be theorised upon or practised remained unspecified. Again, these students echoed Chairman Mao's belief that the great aesthetic problem was to combine political correctness with artistic excellence. Political correctness alone, the mere "poster-and-slogan style" is not enough. Unhappily, they may now find that during their two years' absence it has become more than enough.

Of course, many of the reactions of these students towards Western literature would have been much the same, whether they were moulded in the image of the 1957 Chairman Mao or the 1966 model. They naturally refused to believe that when George Orwell praised the English working-class in his essays or deplored the treatment of Afro-Asians by Europeans he could be doing anything but showering hypocritical insults on the workers and the Afro-

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Asians respectively. They had never read *Animal Farm* yet they knew that nothing but evil could come from the pen of a man who was capable of such a vile slander on Leninist Russia. At the other extreme, they were very polite about Shakespeare and Dickens, though they showed little acquaintance with either and no great enthusiasm to read them. The only two species of writing which they could approve were "critical realism" and "positive romanticism," but they were not prepared to regard any English writer known to them as coming within either of these categories. They seemed rather uncertain as to what these terms implied and I was never successful in establishing where they had got them from. Certainly not from any Marxist critic of the sophistication, for instance, of Georg Lukács.

Often the reaction to an English writer seemed to be copied from a party handbook, as, for instance, in discussing the occasional essays of Sir Max Beerbohm. Sensing that they were on ground even more unfamiliar than usual, the Chinese students merely maintained that there were three groups of writers in a pre-revolutionary society: those who were hostile to the People, those who were on the side of the People, and those who pretended to be on the side of the People but were really out for themselves. There were bad times coming for this last group. It was hard for them to judge, they explained, which group Sir Max came into. As a matter of fact, they could have judged easily enough but they were capable, as guests, of showing extreme deference towards a man upon whom their hosts had thought it worthwhile to confer a knighthood, or any other kind of national honour. Their reaction to other established figures of English literature was no less remarkable in its way. They showed considerable interest in Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, especially in the eleventh chapter, "Some Erewhonian Trials," in which Butler describes how those who have suffered some kind of loss are savagely punished in the Personal Bereavement Court. To the Chinese it seemed not merely amusing but uproariously funny that a man who had been swindled out of his savings or whose wife had died should be punished for his misfortune by being imprisoned or flogged. Their reaction seemed to confirm Lawrence Durrell's suggestion that if De Sade were translated into Chinese, he would bring the house down. On the other hand, they had little sympathy for the attitude of Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*: to show disgust at the human race or the human condition was an almost unforgivable political error. There was never to be any doubt about the eventual triumph of the cause in which one believed and they were almost embarrassed by what they regarded as the defeatist attitude of such accounts of, say, the First World War as Robert Graves' in *Good-Bye to All That*.

THEY DIVIDED WRITERS into two basic types, "progressive" and "hack." A progressive writer naturally used his talent "as a weapon to fight for justice and peace and push forward the wheel of history." ("The wheel of history" was one of many metaphors culled from Mao's works, in this case from his major speech during the visit to Russia in 1957.) A hack writer was one who wrote "not only for money and fame and sheer egoism but also for political motives." The idea that a politically-motivated writer can be dismissed as a hack might seem potentially dangerous from a Chinese view without the following qualification. "Writers of this kind invariably serve the rich and maintain the social system under which they set to writing...." Music, like literature, was acceptable only if it avoided pessimism and undue introspection by being harnessed to the wheel of history. As one student explained, "Some people might regard music as an enjoyment. But I hold that people enjoy music not only for its nice sound effect, but—I suppose this is the most important purpose—for getting encouragement in their fight for the future...."

As in the case of the Puritan tradition of literary criticism in England, the Chinese combined their belief in the duty of literature to preach a specific morality with their total disapproval of any literature which portrayed promiscuity, violence, or easy living. To a Western reader, they seemed to preserve a strangely pre-Freudian approach to literature, while in their own writing, the convenient figleaf of political orthodoxy or of "comradeship" conceals the relationship of the sexes. Like the English Puritans of the later seventeenth century, these students live with the memory of political revolution and civil war. Like those English Puritans, they are suspicious of mere "fiction" written to entertain its readers. If a book is unedifying—let alone pornographic or sensational—that is enough to condemn it. In this respect, the Chinese might have made strange cultural alliances, not only with Puritan critics of the seventeenth century but with nineteenth-century Americans like Anthony Comstock, or nineteenth-century Englishmen like Thomas Bowdler. Had they been Bowdler's contemporaries and compatriots, their names would no doubt have appeared in the list of subscribers to the Society for the Suppression of Vice.

MOST OF THE GROUP were anxious to try their hand at writing short stories, with surprisingly diverse results. Indeed, once

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

practice had been substituted for literary theory it was interesting to see how unedifying many of the stories were by Mao's standards. There were, of course, tales like that of Li-Po, the team leader, throwing himself under a train and thus saving its passengers from certain death further down the line: a story whose value, I was assured, consisted almost entirely in its truth. There seems to be a high mortality rate among literary heroes through incidents of this kind. A recently-completed novel in the monthly *Chinese Literature* tells the story of Ouyang Hai's death in an almost identical act of self-sacrifice; and in the same number there is an account of Liu Ying-chun's death, a hero who threw himself in the path of a team of horses and gun carriage to save the lives of six children. He, too, is now the subject of poems, songs, and even a film.

Yet the majority of the students' stories were about less heroic events than these. Most of them were old enough to have lived all or part of their childhood before the final triumph of Mao in 1949. The stories began to fill with nostalgic portraits of grandparents, uncles, aunts—rarely parents—and childhood memories of days when the sun always shone and politics could hardly have been further from anyone's mind. It seemed much more like an initiation into the ancient cult of ancestor worship than an introduction to the Cultural Revolution. By a nice coincidence, I discovered, the name of one student had the meaning in Chinese of "filial piety." It will be interesting to see whether students young enough to have no memories of the "old days" will be capable of writing the same sort of stories a decade hence. If not, the Cultural Revolution will have served its purpose. Naturally, the milder forms of ancestor worship and revolutionary fervour are not mutually exclusive. One story, which I understood was to be called *The Confidence Man,* materialised as *Confidence Girl—My Aunt,* and proved, of course, to be an account of auntie's confidence in all things revolutionary.

EVEN FROM A LIMITED experience of Mao's disciples, it is tempting to look for some cultural bridge between China and the West, though there is unlikely to be more than a restricted flow of traffic over it for some time to come. By comparison, the bridge with Russia might have been easier to build. However intransigent Leninist or Stalinist Russia might seem, there was a comparatively recent non-Communist tradition of art, literature, and music which was acceptable to many post-revolutionaries and which had much in common with the culture of Western Europe. This is obviously not true

New light on an episode of singular historical importance

SUEZ

TEN YEARS AFTER

In this dramatic account and reassessment of the Suez crisis of 1956, many of the key figures recall and comment on their actions from the vantage point of a decade later. The text of last year's controversial series in the BBC Third Programme *Suez: Ten Years After* includes material never before published, and throws new light on the whole incident. President Nasser, Christian Pineau, David Ben-Gurion and Anthony Nutting head an impressive list of more than twenty-five contributors introduced by Peter Calvocoressi. **20s.**

BBC ORDER THROUGH BOOKSELLERS or send crossed cheque/p.o. for 21s. 3d. to BBC Publications, P.O. Box 1 AR, London, W.1

£1000

Macmillan announce a first novel competition open to professors, readers, lecturers, librarians and postgraduate students in universities throughout the United Kingdom and the Republics of Eire and South Africa. Options on the winning novel have been taken by Penguin Books for the United Kingdom and Commonwealth paperback rights and by Alfred A Knopf for the American rights.

For full details write to: James Wright, Macmillan University First Novel Competition, Little Essex Street, London WC2.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of China, whose culture is a matter of much more general ignorance in the West and whose present generation seems bent upon destroying that culture with a thoroughness the Soviets could hardly have matched. In a year of discussions with twelve students the only subject guaranteed to be non-controversial and of some mutual interest was the development of science and technology. Of course, these students were not scientists and the most ambitious piece of "scientific" writing never got much beyond describing the mechanism of a bicycle pump but science, nonetheless, seemed a useful no-man's-land in a roomful of non-scientists. Authors who might otherwise have been regarded with intense suspicion by the Chinese suddenly became acceptable as authorities on science and the philosophy of science. They read with approval most of the sections of Cardinal Newman's *Discourses on the Nature and Scope of University Education* dealing with the place of the sciences in the scheme of knowledge. In the long run, however, science might prove to be less a bridge than a tightrope.

Now that the wisdom of allowing these and other flowers to blossom in 1957 has been so forcefully questioned, it seems unlikely that the returning students will find Peking a more congenial city than when they left it. Even their inflexible dedication may seem revisionist by current standards of political orthodoxy. *"We'll not remove our uniforms until/We've wiped out every termite and rat,"* promise the young poets of the Cultural Revolution. Leaving Heathrow in the uniform of the British middle class, these students seemed, rather like Cecily Cardew, pleased to say that they had never seen a termite or a rat.

The Folly of Censorship

By J. W. Lambert

SINCE THE SUBJECT is one of great importance I should have welcomed an honest and rigorous argument with an open supporter of censorship. But I address myself with some weariness to answering the wisely anonymous commentator who, in the May issue of ENCOUNTER, attacked Philip Toynbee, Bernard Levin, the *Times Literary Supplement*, and myself in a befuddled effort to undermine our assorted views on the matter. He (or more likely, on the strength of it, she) requires, since ENCOUNTER has given these unhappy ramblings house-room, a serious and considered reply; yet it is hardly possible to give one to a controversialist whose manner and matter (or lack of it) alike make plain that he is either both ignorant and slow-witted, or willing to embrace a wide variety of contrived irrelevance and cautious misrepresentation to smear an argument he is presumably unable to rebut by rational means.

The purpose of my article in *The Sunday Times* was threefold. First, to advance, not as an established fact but for consideration, the view that, in the field of the arts and entertainment, any form of official or quasi-official censorship was not only undesirable but unnecessary—that if it were to cease to exist, at all levels, the country would not be flooded by a torrent of sadism and pornography; that appetites for these things would remain very much as they always have been, though very likely somewhat lessened by the removal of the element of outrage to society. Second, to ask for a sensible avoidance of the hypocrisy which bedevils discussion of this subject; to suggest, in short, that otherwise intelligent and well-meaning people (hopefully assuming that this concept does not necessarily involve a contradiction in terms) should no longer utter phrases like "Of course, I'm absolutely against any form of censorship, but one must draw the line somewhere." Third, to suggest that in an increasingly impersonal world we should be increasingly wary of handing over decisions to any form of Authority—not least decisions about what we ourselves, and our children, should be allowed to see, hear and read.

I do not claim that any of these propositions is self-evident. I do claim that they deserve serious examination, and I am disappointed that they have not been given it by ENCOUNTER's commentator. The crab-like angle of his approach instantly signals the weakness not of his case—for he has no case—but of his attack on mine. With matters of great importance awaiting attention, he chooses to begin by playing with my own opening remarks, in which I said that the subject of censorship was coming to the

J. W. LAMBERT *is the literary editor of the* Sunday Times, *and a frequent writer and broadcaster on literature and the theatre.*

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

boil again, not least "in the socially all-important field of the arts." All this prompts is a sad little bubble of facetiousness: what do I mean by "socially"—"as *chic* as the *Sunday Times* and Lord Snowdon can make them"? It is ENCOUNTER's commentator, not the *Sunday Times* or Lord Snowdon, who seems determined to trivialise a serious matter with feeble sneers. Still, at this degree of muddleheadedness any misunderstanding is possible; I had better spell out that by socially I mean "operating within the fabric of society"—and by "society" I mean the whole community.

Still casting round, rather desperately it begins to seem, for any stick to beat me with—or to avoid for as long as possible discussion of the real points at issue—ENCOUNTER's commentator then moves on from one triviality to another: "If 'socially' is meant at all seriously, I can think of several things which are more important, like housing, or health, or education." Here of course one is all but overcome by the fatigue of arguing with a writer who doesn't—or for the purposes of disparagement ill-advisedly pretends he doesn't—properly understand the English language: who apparently believes that "all-important" means "more important than anything else." Well, once again let me spell it out. I see no point in playing priority games in the abstract, and in the context of this subject they are beside the point. By "all-important" I mean, of course, both very important and pervasively important—important, especially in an age of mass media, as influential factors in almost every aspect of life in a modern community, including housing, health, and education.

Even yet ENCOUNTER's commentator cannot nerve himself to discuss the real subject of his reflections. Groping for yet another distraction, he trips over a snare of his own making and comes up with yet another sneer of misrepresentation: "Being socially all-important, the arts, for Mr. Lambert, deserve their freedom...." But he knows as well as I do that there was absolutely no suggestion in my article that the arts deserve their freedom *because* they are socially all-important, however you choose to interpret the latter phrase. If it comes to that, and at the risk of unkindly insisting upon the niceties of the English language, I should point out... but no, it's too cruel. Let us move on to the exciting moment when ENCOUNTER's commentator actually does bring himself to confront my suggestions.

AND WHEN WE DO SO, what a disappointment! He does manage—and all credit to him, since it must obviously, for one at once so hostile and so confused, have been a task no less difficult

A MEETING BY THE RIVER

Christopher Isherwood

Desperately serious and yet essentially comic, a sensitive portrayal of psychological conflict between an ascetic young man and his worldly brother. 21s

THE SEA YEARS OF JOSEPH CONRAD

Jerry Allen

"Miss Allen is successful in conveying to us Conrad the writer in relation to his books ... to know the man better in that sort of relation can only add to our enjoyment of his work."
The Times Literary Supplement

"She covers much of Conrad's life, and provides some excellent material not yet made public." Anthony Powell, *Daily Telegraph*
With 56 illustrations 45s

THE PRESS IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

E. Lloyd Sommerblad

In the fast-growing states of Africa and the East the era of the zealous missionary has passed. As Mr. Sommerblad shows in his vitally important study, the press is irreplaceable as an educational medium, and its development must be a cause, rather than a result, of general economic development. He has drawn on his extensive experience with UNESCO and elsewhere, and his analysis includes practical suggestions for problems of communication that occur both in the political and economic sphere. Sydney University Press. 34s

METHUEN

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

than disagreeable—to set down an accurate summary of my views. But when he comes to comment upon them, words fail him—a humiliating situation, deserving much sympathy, for a would-be writer of polemic to find himself in. "He offers a curious argument.... Mr. Lambert's argument is such an odd one"—fair enough as a touch of preliminary skirmishing. But to my astonishment this turns out to be all, positively all, he has to offer by way of argument; and confronted by my suggestion that we should all take very seriously the powers of self-censorship we exercise in everyday life, that we should not be too eager to hand them over to an official body, he can only "confess that I haven't the slightest notion what this means."

His observations offer, in short, no conceivable grounds for any kind of pointful discussion. But then he is so clearly, not to say unhealthily, obsessed by the Moors murders that, although he devotes rather more space to me than to his other targets, it will be a kindness to assume that he cannot really pay attention to what I am saying, because "Mr. Lambert does not seriously consider the implications" of these dreadful events. And it is quite true that, although nobody I hope will suppose that I am indifferent to them, I do not believe that these implications—whatever they are—have any vital bearing upon the question of censorship and society as a whole. I believe that taste and standards can be corrupted by works which are aimed at weak spots, but never to the point of creating psychosis. The appetites of people like Brady are formed long before any books or films or whatever can have influenced them. Their appetites will lead them to the literature, not vice versa. And if censorship is to be applied, how is the Index to be compiled? Is it to be built up by having titles added to it every time a book is known to have been read by a psychotic murderer? Or is a precautionary list to be drawn up of books which *might* trigger off a madman?

The suggestion is no sooner made than it is seen to be absurd. Moreover, if the list were compiled, the books upon it would at once acquire a disgraceful factitious glamour. Many would thus be drawn to read them who would otherwise not bother. This in turn would surely defeat the whole object of the move; and though in my view it would do little harm of any serious immediate kind, it would encourage the spread—which we have seemed to be diminishing—of a much more widespread, and ultimately much worse, corruption. It would open the doors once more to the squalid and the furtive, encourage the nasty delights of shame and guilt, nourish far more readily than freedom the hateful fantasies of rejection.

Iniquity?

NOT LONG AGO, I raised a little storm by suggesting, in a letter to the *Guardian*, that it was not desirable for German sausage to be available in a relatively cheap package form in the cafeterias of English railway stations. Was I, then, taking a stand against the totally permissive, and promulgating that all food should not be available to all people? To this, I reply unequivocally: that is what I was suggesting.

Before derision breaks upon my head for snobbishly and dictatorially dividing people into two categories, *table d'hôte* and *à la carte*, I hasten to say that the above paragraph is exactly that which appeared in a recently published book (taken seriously in some quarters) except for the substitution of certain words. Instead of "German sausage," the original had Krafft-Ebing; instead of "package form," paperback edition; instead of "cafeterias," bookstalls; instead of "food," books.

Is the first version any less crass than mine? The extract is, of course, from Pamela Hansford Johnson's *On Iniquity*, in which she dilates her brief but understandably upsetting attendance at the Moors murder trial into ever wider and ever muzzier disquisitions upon contemporary society and its attitudes. In the May ENCOUNTER, *R* surveyed the issues raised in *On Iniquity* and the reactions to it. Although *R* reviewed the debate and put his own viewpoint with painstaking fairness, he seemed to me to omit important points that are not to be ignored if we are accurately to assess the value of Miss Hansford Johnson's demand for censorship (for, while every now and then she turns down the volume of her Nuremburg Rally public address system to deny this in a soft aside, that is precisely what this book is).

First, how, if it is accepted as necessary, do we prevent Krafft-Ebing or De Sade reaching the Bradys and Hindleys? Miss Hansford Johnson can do no better than propose, in cloudy rhetoric, rationing by purse, because note that it is the

KENNETH ALLSOP *was for many years the literary editor of the* Daily Mail. *He is the author of* The Angry Decade (*1958*), The Bootleggers (*1961*), *and* Scan (*1965*). *His* Hard Travellin', *a social-history of the hobo, is being published this autumn. He is at present a regular interviewer on BBC Television's daily magazine programme, "24 Hours." Among his contributions to* ENCOUNTER *are "Music by Muzak" (February 1967), "Tom Brown's Schooldays" (November 1965), and interviews with Ignazio Silone (March 1962) and Arthur Miller (July 1959).*

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Now . . . a truly **international** journal of opinion and reportage illuminating the political, economic and cultural relationships of Europe and America . . . **INTERPLAY**

Do you think that America and Europe are drifting apart?

Do you think Americans are forgetting Europe to concentrate on Southeast Asia?

Do you think it logical that international affairs be covered by an international journal of opinion—a free exchange of views between Europeans and Americans?

Do you think a review supported by the following people is worth your attention?

INTERNATIONAL EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD:
George W. Ball—United States
Kurt Birrenbach—Federal Republic of Germany
Jean-Claude Casanova—France
Lord Cromer—United Kingdom
Countess Marion Doenhoff—Federal Republic of Germany
François Duchene—United Kingdom
Lord Harlech (David Ormsby-Gore)—United Kingdom
Christian A. Herter, Jr.—United States
Max Kohnstamm—Netherlands
Jean Laloy—France
Douglas LePan—Canada
Robert Manning—United States
Ben T. Moore—United States
Aurelio Peccei—Italy
Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.—United States
Marshall Shulman—United States
Altiero Spinelli—Italy
Marc Ullmann—France
Kenneth Younger—United Kingdom

Then **INTERPLAY** is for you.

INTERPLAY begins publication next month.
Will you be among its Charter Subscribers?

INTERPLAY
C.P.D. Ltd., 25-29 Worship St. / London, E.C.2, England

To introduce you to INTERPLAY, a Charter Subscription for one year (10 issues) is available at only £2.10. The two-year rate is £4.6; three year, £5.15. If you are not more than pleased with this new journal of opinion, you may cancel your subscription for full refund on all issues still due.

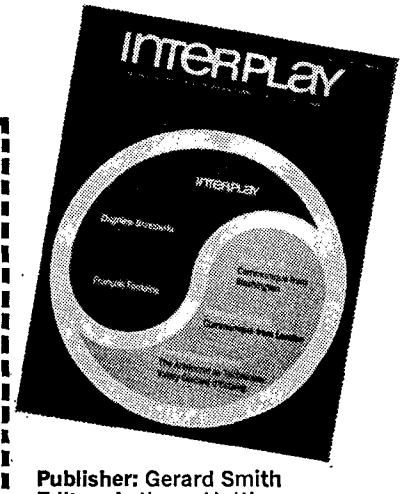
Please enroll me as a Charter Subscriber to INTERPLAY
☐ 1 year ☐ 2 years ☐ 3 years
☐ Please note the number of subscriptions required.
☐ Cheque for £_____ is enclosed. ☐ Please bill me.

Name_____

Address_____

_____

EN



Publisher: Gerard Smith
Editor: Anthony Hartley
Managing Editor: James Chace

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"relatively cheap paperback" that menaces morals. Ah, how simple it would be if perversion and violence were confined to the brutish lower-income bracket. Then for sure the price-mechanism would work beautifully. Pornography, classical and newly minted, could be circulated in only costly limp-leather private editions, to be read with urbane sophisticated amusement by the educated élite, merely a facet of their richly cultivated lives—a *soupçon* of *Justine* for flavour between the Gold Cup and the opera —in contrast with, in Miss Hansford Johnson's reference to De Sade, "minds unprepared or untrained to take a long, cool look at him."

Sadly, however, looks even at that eminence aren't always long and cool; kinky tastes and monstrous behaviour are not measurable by either class or educational slide-rule. As we all know (if we care to remember), reports of society divorces and biographies of the well-bred show that the diversions of the rich and professional classes may be more elegantly discreet but could easily provide the material for a *Last Exit to Brompton Road*. Ideally, if man did dwell on spiritual plateaux appropriate to specific talents it would mean that to be able to perform a violin concerto exquisitely or know the language of pure mathematics would invalidate, say, a taste for dirty photographs or predilections for nymphets; but man is not thus consistent, and the ivory tower of culture has many underground tunnels.

Some regard must, unfortunately, be paid to the means whereby Miss Hansford Johnson urges this policy, to her livid style and technique of excitation of passion, rather than thinking, about gagging writers. These are some of her phrases:

> . . . to explore whether there was not, in our increasingly permissive society, some compost-heap of rottenness out of which such ugly weeds could flourish and grow lush. . . .
>
> The all-permissive, the "swinging society": under its Big Top, the whole garish circus of the new freedom to revel, through all kinds of mass media, in violence, in pornography, in sado-masochism. . . .
>
> A wound in the flesh of our society had cracked open, we looked into it, and we smelled its sepsis. . . .
>
> Whether, by mass-communications of all kinds, we in the West are not poisoning the air, whether it may be due to its infection that some children die. . . .
>
> There is a tyranny of libertarianism as well as of restrictions, and we can already hear its baying, and the rolling of its tumbrils. . . .
>
> The flood of sadistic pornography which is making the Western world look so hideous. . . .
>
> When the Sermon on the Mount was bundled into the dustbin. . .
>
> We are equally frenzied in our desire to make the perversions acceptable, from the sadistic maiming and killing, to flagellation, transvestism —anything you like to name. . . .

Now, apart from the hot flush, the untruths, the absurdities, the exaggerations, and the rabble-rousing hysteria of that kind of writing, there is a general contention running through it that everything was nice and well-regulated up to about a decade ago. Suddenly something went hideously wrong. All hell broke loose, is the idea, round about the time that food rationing ended and rock 'n' roll started. Orgies with everything. The Ugly Society arrived. We all, under the influence of nameless evil corrupters—the Permissiveness Pedlars—became "frenzied" to make acceptable those perversions Miss Hansford Johnson lists. (How many flagellation and transvestite parties have you been to lately?)

It would be tedious and unnecessary to set against this taradiddle the case far more capable of documentation: that, despite its imperfections, we live in an altogether more decent, kindly, and concerned society than that seemly past invented by Miss Hansford Johnson. But let me at least ask where today are the public hangings, the industrial exploitation of children, the outings to jeer at the lunatics in Bedlam, the callous indifference to a starving and terribly oppressed poor? Has Miss Hansford Johnson not researched Victorian pornography, an output of unique prolificness, obsessed with whipping and torture, and when the price-mechanism certainly worked in this luxury service for the monied? Has she not read *My Secret Life*, those memoirs of a man of independent means whose priapic career was dedicated to the defilement of skivvies and slum minors bought for shillings, and which reveals a contempt for human beings not present, I believe, in the sleaziest Soho paperbacks?

Well, apparently she hasn't. But one would have thought that it might have occurred to her to reflect how, years before Brady could buy psychopathology at popular prices, vile deeds originated. It is conceivable that Jack the Ripper and Bluebeard could both afford forbidden erotica not then available on bookstall racks, so as to crystallise their dark impulses—in which case the price-mechanism did not solve the problem. On the other hand, long before the Swinging Sixties the young have been assaulted and slain by hunting perverts, either unlettered or too moronic to mouth through even the pristine *News of the World*, so who were anyway beyond the compass of the price-mechanism. Furthermore, it seems improbable that Christie was a student of Magnus Hirschfeld and his textbooks on necrophilia. *Lolita* hadn't been published when Straffen was first blearily focusing on little girls.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IT IS HERE THAT I feel *R* is misled when he worriedly half-agrees that "If it can be shown or even very strongly suspected that a particular book or play will lead to a single sadistic murder, then that book or play should if possible be suppressed." Perhaps. But it cannot be shown: for the sadistic murderer, if he never glimpsed a book or play, might equally well, in this hypothetical area, have swerved off track with the same frightful results. To put it another way, a far greater number of children are killed and mutilated by the motor car each year. Guilty drivers are rightly punished, but no one suggests that the motor car should be banned.

The preoccupation of all would-be censors is, of course, sex. Behind all the cries of horror at the grotesque warpings of the sexual urge is a much more basic emotion: fear and hatred of sex itself, of its raptures, its force, its sensuality. Granted, scenes of love-making in books are stimulating. But what do they stimulate? Desire, which, if no shared outlet is available, is likely to be expressed in masturbation—than which, as Simon Raven once pointed out, there is no more harmless, pleasant, and inexpensive pastime. At least that submission is as sound as the other, that such literature triggers rape and atrocity. Those who maintain this seem never to extend their equation to an Agatha Christie murder mystery being the cause of undetected slaughter-by-teacup in Home Counties vicarages. Dr. Alex Comfort once remarked about murder literature: "Musing about murder is apparently 'healthy'; musing about sexual enjoyment is not."

Death, in fact, when not directly connected with sex disturbs the censorship campaigners curiously little. The sexual murder of a child is indeed horrible, but not more so than the sanctioned murder of children, families, villages, townships, by aerial bombardment. I wonder which is the more damaging to a human personality, and so onward to other human beings —Krafft-Ebing or a manual for air-crew on the dropping of napalm? The misuse of sex ending in a crime arouses a great vehemence of feeling; the misuse of power ending in war is generally accepted with at best apathy and at worst approval. What unrealised scope there is for those whose attentions are fixed excitedly upon pornography and quasi-pornography to protest as vociferously about the greater obscenity.

R calculated (disputably, I'd have thought) that if the Moors murder case did "exhibit the power of literature to deprave and corrupt, we must accept that this is also true of some 60 or 70 per cent of today's fiction." As he seemed, unhappily, to capitulate to Miss Hansford Johnson's case, I would be interested to know if he would put *The Unspeakable Skipton* within this category of fiction. In this novel, which

PM PALL MALL

ISRAEL: MIRACLE IN THE DESERT
TERENCE PRITTIE
(*The Guardian*'s diplomatic correspondent)
The dramatic story of the birth of Israel and its turbulent development. Special attention is given to the country today and its relations with the surrounding Arab states. *Illustrated* 45s.

HELL IN A VERY SMALL PLACE
The Siege of Dien Bien Phu
BERNARD B. FALL
'Achieves the closest possible synthesis of previous research and known documents with the personal, impartial, but profoundly human contribution of a good historian.' *The New York Times Book Review.*
Illustrated 55s

HO CHI MINH ON REVOLUTION
Selected Writings, 1920–66
Edited and with an Introduction by
BERNARD B. FALL
Ho Chi Minh *is* North Vietnam in the same sense that de Gaulle is France's Fifth Republic. This collection of Ho Chi Minh's writings is a record of his role in international politics over the past 50 years. 50s

VIETNAM: A DRAGON EMBATTLED
Vol. I. From Colonialism to the Viet-Minh
Vol. II. Vietnam at War
JOSEPH BUTTINGER
An exhaustive history of Vietnam from the conquest of Indo-China up to, and including, the fall of the Diem regime. *2 vols. (boxed)* 130s

BLACK REVOLUTIONARY
George Padmore's Path from Communism to Pan-Africanism
JAMES R. HOOKER
The first major study of the life and work of George Padmore, one of the most powerful influences in shaping modern African nationalism. The story of his life and the large and complex history of Pan-Africanism are finely interwoven.
Pall Mall Library of African Affairs. 35s

Please write for publishers' catalogue to 77–79 Charlotte Street, London W.1

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Miss Hansford Johnson published in 1959, a chapter is devoted to the visit of a group of English intellectuals, male and female, to a brothel in Bruges to watch a "spectacle."

It is certainly a drab and ludicrous show, but it could be argued (most fittingly by Miss Hansford Johnson herself) that it must spread the knowledge of brothel exhibitions to those not already familiar with such hobbies. I recently had the opportunity during a broadcast to ask Miss Hansford Johnson, in light of her strong opinions about the contaminating effects of literature, if she had had any misgivings about putting this scene into her story. "But it was meant to be fun," she explained.

Fun—not to say food—for whom? *The Unspeakable Skipton* sold for 15s. It would seem that, on her own terms of price-mechanism, she and her publisher wanted that fun to be available to all.

Kenneth Allsop

International Commentary

From the Bastille to the Forbidden City

On the Destiny of Revolution—By RAYMOND ARON

INNUMERABLE TRAVELLERS had returned from China with edifying stories about the monolithic unity of the party and the stability of the régime, without suspecting what was happening below the surface. The boldest amongst them wrote full-length books about Mao's China or about the Sino-Soviet conflict, without a word being devoted to the coming storm which for months now has affected more than a quarter of humanity. This is an extraordinary example of short-sightedness, but it is one which hardly deserves reproach, since it is a peculiar feature of totalitarianism that it exposes itself to the sight of all, yet at the same time conceals its real nature.

Diplomats at their posts in Moscow, during the 1930s or during the last years of Stalin, saw nothing, heard nothing. They observed the country in which they lived as if they were recluses. They were in exactly the same situation as the specialists who lived on the other side of the frontier. Six months before the Hungarian revolution I remember one French intellectual who returned to Paris and who, in all good faith, recorded his impressions under the title, *"Le bonheur sur les bords du Danube."* Totalitarianism, from which the Eastern European countries have now emerged, manifests itself as a sort of collective delusion which is half-sincere. Black becomes white, an opponent is assimilated to a *Gestapo* agent through a series of identifications, ideological surrealism mingles mystically with prosaic realism in order to transform it. Western philosophers speculated about this sombre inquisition until the day when the charm was broken, the day when a Russian proletarian, N. S. Khrushchev, brought to his senses by the death of "Number One," had the rough good judgment to state, "A normal man does not confess to crimes which he has not committed unless he has been tortured."

The second terrorist phase of the Soviet Revolution, the only one to be properly totalitarian (the first, from 1917 to 1921, was a civil war), began with the assassination of Kirov in December, 1934, probably on the orders of Stalin himself. The party congress, which was called the congress of the victors, took place that same year. Agrarian collectivisation had been concluded—it was "worse than the civil war," as Stalin told Churchill. It had led to millions of deaths. But, in a way, it had been successful. The old society of rural Russia had been destroyed once and for all and although the production figures of collectivised agriculture re-

PROFESSOR RAYMOND ARON *lectures at the Sorbonne and is a regular columnist for* Le Figaro. *His major study of* Peace and War *has been recently published (Weidenfeld, London; Doubleday, New York). His article "The Shadow of the Apocalypse" appeared in the January* ENCOUNTER.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mained low, yet an increase was just beginning, and the power of the Soviet state over the peasantry was no longer contested. In the absence of abundant harvests the cities were provided for by a reliable system of requisitions. Everything seemed to invite the victors, Stalinists assembled in congress, to relax. No doubt most of them would have liked to do so. But instead they had to accept the great purge. Out of the 139 full and acting members of the Central Committee, elected to the 17th Congress in 1934, 98 were arrested and shot. Following this, millions of *kulaks* were executed or deported, millions of communists, white guards, engineers, writers, officers, peasants, workers, were sent to prison or to the concentration camps. The great purge reached its climax, a grandiose and burlesque climax, with the Moscow Trials. This was a sort of witch-hunt, in which Lenin's companions played their designated roles, in front of judges who were also the slaves of the parts they had to play. Everyone had to speak the lines they had learned. It is possible that no one appreciated the significance, or the purpose, of this sabbath dance in a state which had banished religion and sanctified science.

No one in the Soviet Union has yet had the courage to discuss these aspects of Stalinist totalitarianism. So as to remove an anxious query which is bound to gnaw at the Marxist conscience, both rulers and intellectuals have given the name "Personality Cult" to those terrible years which, even today perhaps, they fail to understand and which still weigh heavily on those who were the accomplices, whether willing or unwilling, of crimes which now are officially attributed to one man. But can the Marxist-Leninist doctrine, without denying itself, attribute to one person what was the fate and martyrdom of a nation?

For thirty years now, people in the West have been trying to find the answer to the question which Togliatti asked at the end of his life. The specialists of Soviet affairs, the so-called Kremlinologists, were not ignorant of the facts. The famous Khrushchev report to the 20th Congress finally obliged the true believers, throughout the world, to believe what they had refused to believe. Why, after the "success" of collectivisation, did Stalin proceed to decimate the party, the administration, the army? An Austrian physicist and a historian who, like most of the prisoners, had had endless discussion in Soviet prisons about this mad fury, once wrote a fascinating book[1] in which they listed the seventeen theories or hypotheses which the victims of the great purge had themselves drawn up, so as to understand what had happened to them. Let me simply quote one or two which offer matter for reflection.

Seventeen years had passed since the seizure of power. The most prodigious hopes of the small Bolshevik group which had taken over the state of the Czars had been more than fulfilled, although, from some points of view, they had been disappointed. What had become of "workers' control," of "equal pay," of party workers receiving the same wage as a skilled workman, of the abolition of any distinction between manual and intellectual work or between town and country? The ruthless mechanism of modern society had played its part. A "new class" of bureaucrats and technicians had been created; post-revolutionary society was also stratified and consisted of a minority which gave orders and the masses which toiled and obeyed. The millennial curse had not been lifted. The Promethean act which, since 1789, had haunted the imagination of dreamers had indeed humbled the exalted and raised the meek; but it had not put an end to the struggle between the proud and the poor, it had only relegated it to the background, thanks to the omnipotence of an élite or of a man: the new class and the Number One. It was from a *tête-à-tête* between the two of them that the great purge emerged.

Was the dictator urged on by a thirst for unlimited power? Was the liquidation of the old party, already weakened by the expulsion of dissident followers of Trotsky, Zinoviev, Bukharin, the necessary condition for supreme triumph? For the sort of triumph which would promote one man, by himself, to the ranks of the divine, to be identified with the party, with the working class, with history itself? Was the Secretary-General a prey to the madness of the Caesars? Did he come to suspect the designs of those nearest to him, did he fear betrayal, did he become unable to distinguish between those who might betray him and those who, in fact, did betray him? In the end, did he not spread through the whole nation, the fear which besieged him in the solitude of the Kremlin? Was not this the fear which Montesquieu had recognised as *"le principe du despotisme"* and which Khrushchev confessed to, with pathetic frankness, in his speech to the 20th Congress?

No one would care to say today which of two motives led Stalin to make the great purge—either hatred of the first generation of revolu-

[1] F. Beck and W. Godin, *Russian Purges and the Extraction of Confession* (New York and London, 1951).

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tionary idealists, or the wish to preserve the fiction of a class struggle which increases as socialism is constructed. If an established régime is to remain revolutionary, then a permanent revolution has to be kept going, even if it has to be decreed from above. Electrification plus Soviets, said Lenin. Electrification plus terror, replied Stalin. But electrification without terror, and after the disappearance of the Soviets, is not this the worse solution for those who are fervent believers in the idea of revolution? Electrification without the Soviets, with leather shoes and goulash, with economic development and a rising standard of living: that is the Khrushchev formula, *i.e.*, "revisionism," or the poor man's "Americanisation."

THE "CULTURAL REVOLUTION" broke out in China seventeen years after Mao Tse-tung had taken power, just as the great purge in Russia took place seventeen years after "the 10 days that shook the world" in 1917. There had not been any struggle in the governing body of the Chinese party, any struggle at all comparable to that which had taken place among Lenin's heirs. Only one of the main leaders, Kao Tang, had been eliminated in the course of the first years. In August 1959 (at the congress of the central committee held at Lushon) a right wing opposition appeared, led by Marshal Peng Teh-huai. This was thought to have sympathy with Moscow and to be critical of the utopian fantasies of Mao. Specialists, those who did not go to Peking but who (like the Kremlinologists) studied reality by means of the texts, knew about the crisis of the Chinese communist party after the second revolution of "the Great Leap Forward."

From 1949 to 1957 the Chinese communist party had seemed to be a model of coherence and moderation, compared to what the Soviet party had been during the first phase of the post-revolutionary period. Economic reconstruction, agrarian collectivisation, industrialisation, all appeared to be successful, even to the eyes of anti-communists. These achievements had cost only a moderate amount of lives compared to the Russian, and to the French precedents. Psychological terrorism, brain-washing, public confession, all inspired feelings of some repugnance and anxiety, but were they worse than the massacres or the great purge? At Bandung, in 1955, Chou En-lai appeared as a conciliator, and he accepted formulae which are now hardly compatible with the orthodox Maoist interpretation of Marxism-Leninism.

The "Great Leap Forward," the people's communes, the blast furnaces in the villages, all these mark the explosion of revolutionary utopianism, the faith that can move mountains. Just as the Russians, against the opinion of Western Marxists (*i.e.*, the Mensheviks), wished to skip the stage of socialism, so from 1957 the Chinese decided that modernisation, industrialisation, communism, would all proceed simultaneously. The countless millions of China would be the architects of a modern economy, just as they had destroyed the order that had prevailed for a thousand years. It was on the masses, and on them alone, that the victory depended in the battle for production as it had in armed battle.

TWO YEARS LATER, the great leap forward was heading for disaster and there was a threat of famine. The statistics, which had so far been victory bulletins, bore no relation to reality. The steel produced in the village blast furnaces was unusable. The conjunction of unfavourable weather conditions and the disorganisation that had come about, created a setback in industrial production. (The departure of the Soviet technicians in 1960 contributed a great deal to this.) From 1960 to 1966 there was a pause, and a kind of *modus vivendi* established between Left and Right, between extremists and moderates, between utopians and technicians. The former looked after public statements, the latter ran the business. The Chinese economy recovered as a result of a relaxation in industrial planning and in the organisation of the communes, without however exceeding the level reached in 1957. In short, practical revisionism co-existed with the violent rejection of any kind of ideological revisionism.

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION has obviously been the explosion of an Utopian frenzy, even though it is at the same time the sign of conflict between two tendencies, two groups within the ruling minority, and even a premature struggle for Mao's succession. Mao storms at the new class much as Stalin did from 1934 to 1938. But Stalin had a docile instrument at his disposal, the secret police. And if he renewed the personnel who directed the State and the economy, he did not question the role of the Party, nor the position of officialdom, nor the need for some discrimination in salaries, nor the authority of those in charge. He replaced a revolutionary party which had been more or less brought to heel, by a party consisting of men belonging to the machinery of state who owed their fortune and their position to Stalin himself.

Mao had no secret police comparable to that of the Soviet Union. Collectivisation in Russia had not led to a failure like that of the great

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

leap forward. It may be that Mao had (as some evidence from China suggests) lost the reality of power since 1959. If this is so, he must have stayed as the symbolic *maître*, the father of his country, but governing power had passed to other hands.

To fight against bureaucratic petrification, to resist the return of social stratification, to revive revolutionary fervour, to prevent a social gap separating the rulers from the masses and the officers from the soldiers, Mao has not so much mobilised the Army (which, in spite of Lin Piao is probably not solidly Maoist) as called upon the Red Guards: the young, the students. He has called upon all those who still have the enthusiasm and the impulse to oppose the heavy weight of social realities by the protestations of faith. The storming of the Tuileries on 10 August 1792, the Winter Palace in 1917, the Forbidden City in 1949—the aspiration to destroy the old world with one blow makes its way from West to East. Constantly foiled by the event, it changes country. More than the idea of Happiness, the idea of Revolution became at the end of the 18th century a new idea in Europe. It has aged in the country where it was born, where it already bears the signs of decrepitude. It is still young in China; but even there it may be dying.

THE IDEA OF REVOLUTION has, from the beginning, been torn by an internal conflict between two notions, both of them characteristic of the modern world: democracy and industrialisation. The dream of a Golden Age, of a return to some primitive society, is one of the origins of modern millenarianism. Faith in science and in technical power is another. The dream and the faith merge together in Marxism which gives a scientific appearance to this unity. The economic dialectic leads, through the collapse of capitalism and the victory of the proletariat, to a society where men are free and equal, masters of nature and of their destiny, themselves directing productive forces which will be sufficiently developed for there to be abundance for all. First of all, since the economic dialectic betrayed the duty assigned to it, the decisive task would have to be entrusted to the Party. It would be the Party which would deliver the final blow to a régime which was doomed but lingering on.

But once the Leninists were in power—victorious Jacobins in a technological century—contemptuous of the political liberties which the French *bourgeoisie*, if not the Paris crowd, had tried to win, they dedicated themselves to industrialisation with an obsessive passion which makes the capitalist passion for gain (so stressed and so derided by Marx) appear trivial and

Ballantyne the Brave
A Victorian Writer and his Family
Eric Quayle
The first biography of R M Ballantyne, Victorian writer of books for boys, of which *The Coral Island* is undoubtedly the most famous.
Illustrated *50s*

The Carpenter Years
Arthur A Cohen
'It seems to me that Arthur Cohen's novel is a most vivid and intelligent look at a very disturbing theme. It is incisive and humane in its writing and has a fine streak of humour beneath the rather dark surface.'
George Steiner *25s*

A Massacre of Innocents
Christopher Brennan
Greece, still reeling from the horror of the Second World War and fast in the grip of the even more senseless Civil War, is the theme of this rich and powerful first novel.
25s.

The Wandering Jew
and other stories
Guillaume Apollinaire
A remarkable collection of short stories by the brilliant and revolutionary French poet. Illustrated after the manner of Aubrey Beardsley by *Antony Little.*
42s

To Celebrate Her Living
Laurence Whistler
Seventy poems written in honour of Jill Furse, Laurence Whistler's young actress wife who died so tragically shortly after their marriage. A companion to his prose tribute *The Initials in the Heart.*
25s

Rupert Hart-Davis

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

negligible. But industrialisation brings with it managers, technicians, discipline of work, bigger remuneration for the more able. At best this can be a meritocracy, at worst the despotism and obscurantism of the men who run the system. A modern industrial society, whether capitalist or socialist, is at the antipodes of an Utopia *communautaire et égalitaire*. Socialism means organisation, not equality; it means discipline, not freedom. The régimes which claim kinship with Marxism-Leninism leave an increasing margin of initiative to individuals. They resign themselves to social distinctions in so far as they abandon excessive hopes and at last grant to the people the reward for their long patience.

ARE THE MARXIST-LENINISTS of Moscow "revisionists"? Yes and no. They are better Marxists than those in China; they abide by the laws of history and economics; they appeal to rationalism; they promise better conditions of living (and nothing is less Marxist than the socialism of penury). But they have gradually lost their Promethean faith. The asceticism of the first believers has, for long now, belonged to the heroic period. Their intelligentsia enters into reasonable discussions with its Western counterpart, while the same records of the same Bécaud and Aznavour are received with the same enthusiasm from one end of Europe to another, from the Atlantic to the Urals. The Marxist-Leninists of the old continent are on the verge of accepting the world as it is.

As for the Maoists, they refuse to resign themselves; and the "cultural revolution," whatever its causes, is testimony to this refusal. The fact that officers are obliged to serve for a few weeks a year as private soldiers is symbolic. The denunciation of the leaders who take "the path of capitalism or revisionism" is equally significant. This does not refer to the private ownership of the means of production. In this sense there is no danger of a "capitalist restoration" in China, any more than there was such a danger in the Soviet Union. What is in question is the human order, the way of life which goes with, or must go with, socialist construction. Modernisation can by itself bring back stratification, dissolve the community, isolate the individual, and enslave him to rational mechanisms which are as indispensable to productivity as they are unintelligible to most participants.

Dead or alive, Mao Tse-tung proclaims with the Red Guard revolution that the human will is capable of overcoming all resistance. The little book of Mao's *Thoughts* is the catechism of a form of Marxism where historical necessity no longer exists and which proclaims the demiurge quality of man and his inspiration. It is a strange Marxism which extols will-power and which is almost spiritualist. But Marxism has only had real influence on the course of history when it was adopted by men and by parties as a breviary for action. It is by absorbing the myth of Revolution which came into existence in 18th-century France that Marxism, the theory of historic necessity, has become the religion of will-power and the apologia of Utopia. In Moscow the myth of Revolution is about to decline to the same status as it has in France from the Third Republic onwards.

MAO TSE-TUNG is preaching a permanent revolution which is putting back the modernisation of the country; and he is not succeeding, as Stalin used to do, in fascinating both friends and enemies. Is it what is excessive in all this frenzy which prevents him from being successful abroad? As both rich and poor nations become aware of the contradiction between utopias and the requirements of economic rationalism, so the idea of Revolution is becoming less attractive and the idea of production more attractive. Does China, isolated and proud of its isolation, give a national significance to an imported ideology? Is the revolutionary idea reaching the end of its journey in Peking, or will it continue to go round the world? Latin America, where so many hatreds are ripening and where so much poverty is evident, may be seized in its turn, tomorrow. After all, in one of the lofty retreats of the mind, the *École Normale Supérieure* of the rue d'Ulm in Paris, an intellectual élite is still affected by the disciplined fervour of the Red Guards and by the platitudes of the Maoist Bible. Perhaps elsewhere there are masses, more numerous and less subtle, who will be swept away by irrepressible hope.

However, the probable path of history seems to me to be different. Great revolutions are sometimes inevitable, but they are always costly, and they themselves suggest the retrospective but vain question: could we not have acquired the achievements of the Revolution at a lesser price? This question, which can be described either as "bourgeois" or as "reasonable," is that which represses utopian dreams and which undermines Promethean ambitions.

Let us not rush to a conclusion. Nations quickly forget the lesson of their misfortunes. Ideologists spare neither their blood nor the blood of others. Revolutionaries, and there will always be some, love man less than they love that which devours him.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"To Write for My Own Race"

The Fiction of Flann O'Brien — By JOHN WAIN

ONE SUNLIT DAY in 1946, or it may have been '47, I went into the Eagle and Child public house, Oxford, and found Kingsley Amis turning over the leaves of a book and chuckling continuously. "Philip lent me this," he said, showing it to me. Since we both (and quite rightly) accepted Philip Larkin as the supreme arbiter on literary matters, this attracted my interest at once. I looked at the book: *At Swim-Two-Birds*, by Flann O'Brien. Neither title nor author meant anything to me; I did not know that Swim-Two-Birds (or Swim-Two-Ducks) was a literal translation of an Irish place-name, nor that "Flann O'Brien" was one of the two pseudonyms of a Dublin writer named Brian O'Nolan—the other being Miles na cGopaleen, under which name he wrote a regular satirical column for the *Irish Times*.

I borrowed the book, whether or not with the permission of the absent owner I do not now recollect, and swallowed it in huge gulps. At once, it went straight into my bloodstream. It had been published in 1939, not a good moment for the appearance in England of any book, least of all a book from Ireland, and it seemed to have sunk without trace. In the next ten years I met less than a score of people who had read it. But these readers tended to form a secret society, they worked underground, and finally another publisher re-issued the book in 1960, this time to an adequate if not altogether perceptive critical reception. The effect on O'Nolan was electrifying; he rapidly published another novel and then another, having in the interval written only his newspaper column and a satire on the Irish-language movement which, appropriately enough, he wrote in Irish. There were also two plays at some stage, which I never saw or met anyone who had seen. (They should be put on, possibly by radio if no theatre can take on the job.)

At Swim-Two-Birds, however, remains O'Nolan's masterpiece. To attempt a criticism of this book is a task I have alternately longed and dreaded to approach. I love it and have always been willing to testify to my love. Yet to discuss it? To do anything more ambitious than merely assert its uniqueness? In an essay published in 1962 I made a passing reference to *At Swim-Two-Birds* as "a Gargantuan comic novel which makes a simultaneous exploration, on four or five levels, of Irish civilisation." The vagueness of "four or five" suggests that I wasn't counting the levels very carefully or distinguishing them with much clarity, but what interests me now, looking back, is my untroubled assumption that the book explored "Irish civilisation." I think so now and I thought so then, but why was I so certain? Partly, I think, for the very reason that it *was* so amusing. Funny writing never really comes over as funny unless it is saying something serious; wild humour in particular, unless it is anchored to the rocks, just floats up into the empyrean and vanishes in a cloud of boredom. As George Orwell noted in connection with Dickens, "You can only create if you *care*. Types like Squeers and Micawber could not have been produced by a hack writer looking for something to be funny about." O'Nolan was a desperately funny writer, therefore (I felt) his work must be about something. If it had merely been a romp, it would have been perfunctory and the perfunctoriness would have shown through.

Basically, *At Swim-Two-Birds* is about a man writing a story about a man writing a story. The narrator (he is nowhere named) is a young student, living with an uncle in Dublin on funds supplied by his father, who lives, presumably, in the country, in order to take his degree at the National University. The young man's life is described in tones of guarded flatness, drained of colour but tinged with irony. He spends a great deal of time in bed, meditating on life and art and in particular on "my spare-time literary activities," as he calls the *magnum opus* he is slowly composing. The uncle is portrayed in comic-satirical vein, though without any real

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

malice, as a lower-middle-class Dubliner, "holder of Guinness clerkship the third class." Through the sardonic eye of the narrator, we catch occasional glimpses of the uncle's life. He converses long and earnestly with his friend Mr. Corcoran; he holds a meeting at his house for the purpose (it seems) of arranging a welcome for some local celebrity who is paying a visit home; we know of this episode only because the nephew comes in that evening the worse for drink and is co-opted into acting as secretary to the meeting, but it is used very skilfully to indicate the nature of the uncle's social circle, their prejudices and preoccupations. One of the men present tells a funny story against the Jesuits; another puts forward the suggestion that at the proposed *Ceilidhe* the programme should include an old-time waltz, and is strongly opposed by Mr. Corcoran. "A Ceilidhe is a Ceilidhe. I mean, we have our own. We have plenty of our own dances without crossing the road to borrow what we can't wear. See the point? It's all right but it's not for us. Leave the waltz to the jazz-boys. By God they're welcome to it as far as I'm concerned." The refreshment budget is then discussed and it is decided to "add another bottle and a couple of dozen stout." The picture is thumb-nail size, but it is a vivid miniature of the mind and life of that generation of the Dublin petty *bourgeoisie* who would be, say, sixty in 1940: the men who remembered the fall of Parnell, who had been of fighting age at the time of the uprising. Narrow as they are, seen as they are through a comic lens, these men are given a stiff, provincial dignity that redeems them.

THEN THERE IS THE LIFE of the narrator himself. Obviously the decision to give him no name is a mild piece of symbolism. He is the writer, the viewing and recording lens, the youth who already, before tasting life, has waved aside the cup and chosen a contemplative role. He lies on his bed as much as possible, smoking and thinking; when he emerges, it is to go to a lecture at the University—another brilliant short sketch—or to consume pints of "plain" (*i.e.* porter, or what we English would call draught stout) with his harmlessly disreputable acquaintances. The flavour of these excursions is fairly suggested by the following extract:

> As I exchanged an eye-message with Brinsley, a wheezing beggar inserted his person at my side and said:
>
> "Buy a scapular or a stud, Sir."
>
> This interruption I did not understand. Afterwards, near Lad Lane police station a small man in black fell in with us and tapping me often about the chest, talked to me earnestly on the subject of Rousseau, a member of the French nation. He was animated, his pale features striking in the starlight and his voice going up and falling in the lilt of his argumentum. I did not understand his talk and was personally unacquainted with him. But Kelly was taking in all he said, for he stood near him, his taller head inclined in an attitude of close attention. Kelly then made a low noise and opened his mouth and covered the small man from shoulder to knee with a coating of unpleasant buff-coloured puke. Many other things happened on that night now imperfectly recorded in my memory but that incident is still very clear in my mind. Afterwards the small man was some distance from us in the lane, shaking his divested coat and rubbing it along the wall. He is a little man that the name of Rousseau will always recall to me. Conclusion of reminiscence.

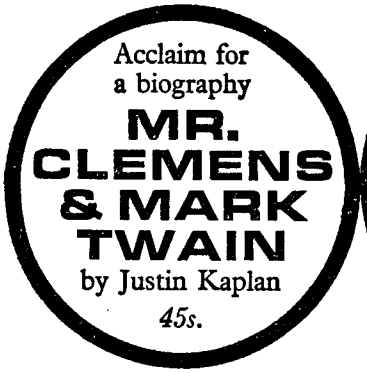
The narrator also attends, on at least one occasion, an evening of high-minded literary talk at the house of a man called Byrne. In his mild way, he is anxious to shine in this circle and gives an account of the progress of his novel "in order to amuse them and win their polite praise."

This novel is a full-blown work of experimentation. The narrator has, of course, an elaborate theory of the art of fiction, which he expounds in a conversation with his friend Brinsley.

> In reply to an inquiry, it was explained that a satisfactory novel should be a self-evident sham to which the reader could regulate at will the degree of his credulity. It was undemocratic to compel characters to be uniformly good or bad or poor or rich. Each should be allowed a private life, self-determination and a decent standard of living. This would make for self-respect, contentment and better service. It would be incorrect to say that it would lead to chaos. Characters should be interchangeable as between one book and another. The entire corpus of existing literature should be regarded as a limbo from which discerning authors could draw their characters as required, creating only when they failed to find a suitable existing puppet. The modern novel should be largely a work of reference. Most authors spend their time saying what has been said before—usually said much better. A wealth of references to existing works would acquaint the reader instantaneously with the nature of each character, would obviate tiresome explanations and would effectively preclude mountebanks, upstarts, thimbleriggers and persons of inferior education from an understanding of contemporary literature. Conclusion of explanation.
>
> That is all my bum, said Brinsley.

THIS PROGRAMME, absurd as it it, comes reasonably close to describing the literary method of *At Swim-Two-Birds*. In particular, it covers the nonchalant non-credibility of the story ("a self-evident sham"), the autonomy and indeed rebelliousness of the imaginary personnel, and the frequent resort to borrowing of characters from previous writing or from legend.

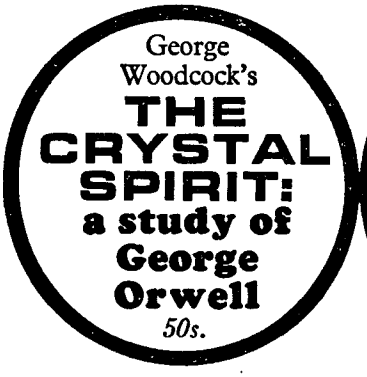
PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



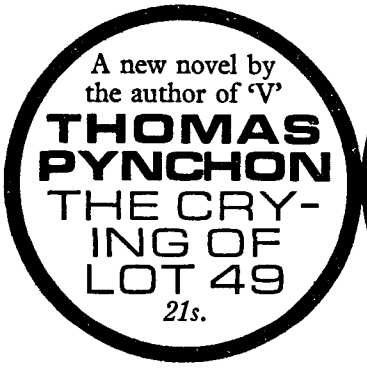
PLAYS

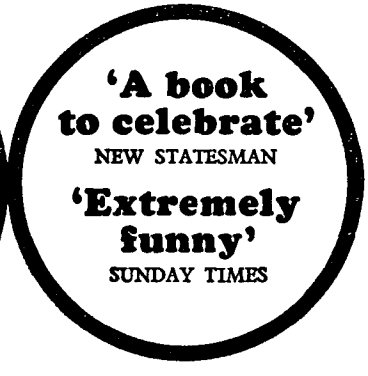
Edward Albee
MALCOLM
adapted from the novel by John Purdy. *21s.*

Slawomir Mrozek
SIX PLAYS *35s.*



JONATHAN CAPE





POETRY

Ted Walker
THE SOLITARIES *18s.*

Robert Bly
SILENCE IN THE SNOWY FIELDS *21s.*

Ken Smith
THE PITY *18s.*

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Except that, true to the book's sardonic farcical atmosphere, the "previous writing" turns out to be itself an invention, and the legends highly fantasticated.

The narrator's novel is about a man named Dermot Trellis, a writer, who lives at the Red Swan Hotel and has spent the last twenty years entirely in bed, rising only to supervise the washing of his linen by a servant-girl, Teresa. Trellis' object is to write a highly moral work on the dangers of vice and wickedness, and for this reason he creates a villain, named Furriskey, who is to exemplify the lusts of the flesh, low cunning and malevolence of every description. Furriskey's first task is to entrap and dishonour a respectable working girl. In the event, when the couple meet they fall in love and decide to form a regular and happy union. This they are able to do only when Trellis is asleep; when awake, he forces all his characters to live with him at the Red Swan Hotel and keeps them under strict surveillance.

Trellis has also created two other men, Shanahan and Lamont. Shanahan is present merely to provide a confidant for Furriskey, but Lamont's function in the plot is that he is the brother of Sheila Lamont, a high-minded and beautiful girl whom Furriskey will also debauch; Lamont will then challenge him. Miss Lamont is also provided with a father in the person of the legendary hero Finn Mac Cool.

Right from the start, things go wrong. Shanahan administers drugs to Trellis to keep him asleep most of the time, and the characters can thus get on with living their own lives. Furriskey marries the girl and they settle down to cosy domestic happiness, except when Trellis briefly awakes and they have to hurry over to the Red Swan Hotel. Trellis, during one of his rare spells of activity, creates Sheila Lamont and then falls in love with her and ravishes her himself, so that she becomes pregnant. Two characters looted by Trellis from folklore are thereby brought into the action; the Pooka MacPhellimey (no doubt MacPhellimey is an individual but the Pooka is a well-identified kind of Irish devil, related to the Welsh *pwcca*, Shakespeare's Puck, etc.), and the Good Fairy. These two are to bargain, in traditional fashion, for ascendancy over the soul of Miss Lamont's unborn child.

As it happens, Miss Lamont never appears in the story; she dies at the birth of her child, who bears the name Orlick Trellis. The *accouchement* provides the occasion for a roll-call of the characters, who by this time are more numerous than this resumé would suggest. Finn Mac Cool, as well as being a hero in his own right, is also a bard with an extensive repertory of ancient Irish legends. Scarcely heeded by the other characters, who regard his tales as respectable but quite irrelevant to their own lives, he provides a continual ground-bass to the novel by recounting the saga of the mad King Sweeney.

There are in this narrative of Finn's a good many things that go over the head of a reader like myself who knows virtually nothing of ancient Irish literature. On the other hand, anyone who has ever looked into the literature of the Middle Ages at all, in any language, can see that another layer of parody is being added to the structure, and that in the main it is affectionate parody. We first meet Finn in a fairly long passage near the beginning of the book, when he is shown as discoursing before a traditional audience of his own people, ritually prompted to speech and song by a person named Conán whose presence is left unexplained, but who is constantly at hand ("hidden Conán") whenever Finn is reciting. In this passage, Finn gives a preliminary indication of the kind of matter that interests him and the Ireland he represents, and the passage concludes with a kind of lament.

> Melodious is your voice, said Conán.
>
> Small wonder, said Finn, that Finn is without honour in the breast of a sea-blue book, Finn that is twisted and trampled and tortured for the weaving of a story-teller's book-web. Who but a book-poet would dishonour the God-big Finn for the sake of a gap-worded story? Who could have the saint Ceallach carried off by his four acolytes and he feeble and thin from his Lent-fast, laid in the timbers of an old boat, hidden for a night in a hollow oak tree and slaughtered without mercy in the morning, his shrivelled body to be torn by a wolf and a scaldcrow and the Kite of Cluain-Eo? Who could think to turn the children of a king into white swans with the loss of their own bodies, to be swimming the two seas of Erin in snow and ice-cold rain without bards or chess-boards, without their own tongues for discoursing melodious Irish, changing the fat white legs of a maiden into plumes and troubling her body with shameful eggs? Who could put a terrible madness on the head of Sweeney for the slaughter of a single Lent-gaunt cleric, to make him live in tree-tops and roost in the middle of a yew, not a wattle to the shielding of his mad head in the middle of the wet winter, perished to the marrow without company of women or strains of harp-pluck, with no feeding but stag-food and the green branches? Who but a story-teller? Indeed, it is true that there has been ill-usage to the men of Erin from the book-poets of the world and dishonour to Finn, with no knowing the nearness of disgrace or the sorrow of death, or the hour when they may swim for swans or trot for ponies or bell for stags or croak for frogs or fester for the wounds on a man's back.
>
> True for telling, said Conán.

We shall revert to this lament later on. What concerns us at the moment is the anticipatory

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

reference to the madness of Sweeney. King Sweeney assaulted the pious hermit Ronan, who was at that moment in the act of taping out the measurements of a new church; whereupon Ronan put a curse on Sweeney which caused him to run mad and naked, rather like Lear, across the length and breadth of Ireland. Sweeney's sufferings are described in Finn's narrative in a vein that mingles the farcical with the terrifying, and he comments on his own plight in a number of lyrics, some of which are mere comical parodies while others come across with genuine force as poems. For example:

A year to last night
I have lodged there in branches
from the flood-tide to the ebb-tide
naked.

Bereft of fine women-folk,
the brooklime for a brother—
our choice for a fresh meal
is watercress always.

Without accomplished musicians
without generous women,
no jewel-gift for bards—
respected Christ, it has perished me.

The thorntop that is not gentle
has reduced me, has pierced me,
it has brought me near death
the brown thorn-bush.

Once free, once gentle,
I am banished for ever,
wretch-wretched I have been
a year to last night.

Without going back to the envelope-story of the narrator and his uncle, we are now operating on at least three levels. The Pooka and the Good Fairy are pure folklore, rendered in terms of outright farce. Finn and his tale of Sweeney come from the ancient heroic world of Ireland.[1] Then we have Furriskey, Shanahan and Lamont, and Mrs. Furriskey, who are modern Dubliners of a lower social class than the narrator's uncle. Now we must take a step further. Shanahan, an older man, has worked in the past for a Dublin writer of sentimental Western romances (*Flower o' the Prairie*, etc.), an acquaintance of Trellis' called William Tracey. He is given to reminiscing about the stories in which Tracey involved him, and in particular about two cowboys, Slug Willard and Shorty Andrews. In one of his tales, the three of them go off to another part of Dublin to recover some cattle rustled by a rival outfit, and finding the

[1] The title of the novel, incidentally, derives from this area of the story, since one of the places visited by Sweeney in his crazed wandering is "the church at Snámh-dá-én (or Swim-Two-Birds) by the side of the Shannon."

W. D. Hudson (General Editor)

New Studies in Ethics

This new series meets a long-felt need in universities for up-to-date studies of the main types of ethical theory.

Greek Ethics by Pamela Huby 8s 6d
Ethical Intuitionism by W. D. Hudson 8s 6d
Existentialist Ethics by Mary Warnock 7s 6d
Contemporary Moral Philosophy by G. J. Warnock 8s 6d

Stanley Eugene Fish

Surprised by Sin

By treating the responses of the reader as basic data and assuming that they are answerable to Milton's intention, Mr Fish resolves the points of controversy that have long divided critics of *Paradise Lost.* 50s

Peter D. Arnott

An Introduction to the Greek World

This lively and readable book provides the uninitiated with answers to everyday questions about Greek literature, history, topography, religion, civilisation, attitudes and achievements. 30s

John Buxton

A Tradition of Poetry

This book, which covers a period of over two hundred years, assesses eight poets: Sir Thomas Wyatt, the Earl of Surrey, George Gascoigne, Michael Drayton, Edmund Waller, Sir Richard Fanshawe, Charles Cotton and the Countess of Winchilsea. 30s

MACMILLAN

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

armed resistance too strong, go away and come back with the Dublin constabulary; we are finally given a police-court report of the affair from a local newspaper.

TRUE TO THE MANIFESTO which lays down that characters should not be created *ab ovo* except when there are no suitable ones already in existence, Furriskey comes to life in a room at the Red Swan Hotel and, wandering nervous and bewildered in this strange world, explores the house until he finds a room in which Shanahan and Lamont are waiting for him. They explain his duties, and he goes out to encounter the girl whom Trellis wishes him to deflower. On his melancholy return, he finds Shanahan and Lamont sitting by the fire, and now Finn is with them. The scene that follows brings into wild juxtaposition Finn's narrative of mad Sweeney and Shanahan's reminiscences of the old Tracey days: ancient, lofty Ireland and modern pulp-magazine culture are brought together in hopeless incomprehension. But Shanahan's lore extends beyond Westerns. He knows and admires the work of Jem Casey, the labouring poet.

> It's a quare one and one that takes a lot of beating. Not a word to nobody, not a look to left or right but the brain-box going there all the time. Just Jem Casey, a poor ignorant labouring man but head and shoulders above the bloody lot of them, not a man in the whole country to beat him when it comes to getting together a bloody pome—not a poet in the whole world that could hold a candle to Jem Casey, not a man of them fit to stand beside him. By God I'd back him to win by a canter against the whole bloody lot of them give him his due.
>
> Is that a fact, Mr. Shanahan, said Lamont. It's not every day in the week you come across a man like that.
>
> Do you know what I'm going to tell you, Mr. Lamont, he was a man that could give the lot of them a good start, pickaxe and all. He was a man that could meet them . . . and meet the best . . . and beat them at their own game, now I'm telling you.
>
> I suppose he could, said Furriskey.
>
> Now I know what I'm talking about. Give a man his due. If a man's station is high or low he is all the same to the God I know. Take the bloody hats off the whole bunch of them and where are you?
>
> That's the way to look at it, of course, said Furriskey.
>
> Give them a bloody pick, I mean, Mr. Furriskey, give them the shaft of a shovel into their hand and tell them to dig a hole and have the length of a page of poetry off by heart in their heads before the five o'clock whistle. What will you get? By God you could take off your hat to what you'd get at five o'clock from the crowd and that's a sure sharkey.
>
> You'd be wasting your time if you waited till five o'clock if you ask me, said Furriskey with a nod of complete agreement.
>
> You're right there, said Shanahan, you'd be waiting around for bloody nothing. Oh I know them and I know my hard Casey too. By Janey he'd be up at the whistle with a pome a yard long, a bloody lovely thing that would send my nice men home in a hurry, home with their bloody tails between their legs. Yes, I've seen his pomes and read them and . . . do you know what I'm going to tell you, I have loved them.

A poem of Casey's is then solemnly recited: a piece of heavy doggerel with the refrain "A PINT OF PLAIN IS YOUR ONLY MAN." This poem provides the necessary contrast with the lyrics of Sweeney, and also hooks on to the enveloping story, in which one of the narrator's college friends, as they sit on high stools at a bar, utters the same refrain.

> He leaned over and put his face close to me in an earnest manner.
>
> Do you know what I am going to tell you, he said with his wry mouth, a pint of plain is your only man.

This scene is the first crescendo of the book, the first to illustrate the technique of superimposition and palimpsest which links this novel firmly with central 20th-century works from *The Waste Land* and the *Cantos* to *Finnegans Wake*. It is also the first passage in which the critique of Irish civilisation becomes explicit. Shanahan and Lamont, bored by Finn's recital and continually interrupting it, are contrasted with the audience he had in the earlier extract, hanging on his words and breaking their silence only in prescribed moments of antiphon.

THIS SCENE is the first of three set-pieces which make up the structure of the book's inner action, the story of Trellis and his characters. The second set-piece is the journey of the Pooka and the Good Fairy towards the birth-chamber of Orlick Trellis. The Good Fairy comes to the Pooka early in the morning, wakes him, gets into his pocket, and the two set off. In the course of their journey they meet the two Dublin cowboys, Slug Willard and Shorty Andrews; then Jem Casey; and finally mad King Sweeney. Crazed and enfeebled by his sufferings, Sweeney is helped to his feet by the others as if he were the victim of a street accident. The scene has a wild, farcical poignancy; it is like nothing else I can remember having read; there are, of course, similar effects in *Ulysses* but this scene, coming as it does after a long exposure to the book's multiple action, strikes me as more moving than the comparable passages in Joyce. The scene is too long to quote (it occurs on pages 179 to 185 in the MacGibbon

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

& Kee edition of 1958), but here is a short specimen:

The madman fluttered his lids in the searchlight of the sun and muttered out his verses as he tottered hither and thither and back again backwards in the hold of his two keepers.

Though my flittings are unnumbered,
my clothing today is scarce,
I personally maintain my watch
on the tops of mountains.

O fern, russet long one,
your mantle has been reddened,
there's no bedding for an outcast
on your branching top.

Nuts at terce and cress-leaves,
fruits from an apple-wood at noon,
a lying-down to lap chill water—
your fingers torment my arms.

Put green moss in his mouth, said the Good Fairy querulously, are we going to spend the rest of our lives in this place listening to talk the like of that? There is a bad smell in this pocket, it is not doing me any good. What are you in the habit of keeping in it, Sir?

Nothing, replied the Pooka, but tabacca.

It's a queer smell for tabacca, said the Good Fairy.

One and sixpence I pay in silver coin for an ounce of it, said the Pooka, and nice as it is for the wee pipe, it is best eaten. It is what they call shag tabacca.

Notwithstanding all that, said the Good Fairy, there is a queer hum off it. It would be the price of you if I got sick here in your pocket.

Now be very careful, said the Pooka.

Quick march my hard man, said Casey briskly to the king, put your best leg forward and we will get you a bed before the sun goes down, we'll get a sup of whiskey into you to make you sleep.

We'll get you a jug of hot punch and a packet of cream crackers with plenty of butter, said Slug, if you'll only walk, if you'll only pull yourself together, man.

And getting around the invalid in a jabbering ring, they rubbed him and cajoled and coaxed, and plied him with honey-talk and long sweet-lilted sentences full of fine words, and promised him metheglin and mugs of viscous tar-black mead thickened with white yeast and the spoils from hives of mountain-bees, and corn-coarse nourishing farls of wheaten bread dipped in musk-scented liquors and sodden with Belgian sherry, an orchard and a swarm of furry honey-glutted bees and a bin of sun-bronzed grain from the granaries of the Orient in every drop as it dripped at the lifting of the hand to the mouth. . . .

HARRISON SALISBURY

Behind the Lines — HANOI

The controversial new book by the headline-hitting New York Times correspondent and author of *Orbit of China*. 'His book, in spare, restrained prose, bears the hallmark of good reporting and is an outstanding achievement by any standard' *George Evans, Sunday Telegraph*

SECKER & WARBURG / Illustrated / 30s

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A long catalogue follows, doubtless in parody of ancient Irish heroic lays. There is nothing *new* in this; formally, it is only doing again what Eliot did when he brought Phlebas the Phoenician and Tiresias into juxtaposition with the typist putting a record on the gramophone, or Joyce when he equated Nausicaa with Gerty MacDowell. But it is, to my mind, at the very least the equal of these celebrated passages. It is so richly imagined, so concrete; it arises spontaneously from a sense of the irreconcilable elements in the Irish consciousness; we do not hear the click of scissors and the swish of the paste-brush, we see and participate.

Finally the Pooka's party arrive at the Red Swan Hotel, and while waiting for the birth and the subsequent refreshments they play cards. The Good Fairy loses, and having no money is obliged to raise a loan from the Pooka, who exacts the condition that the Good Fairy shall give up all claim to influence the child who is coming into the world. Orlick Trellis is thus born and nurtured into devilish cruelty and vengefulness. The Pooka takes him away to his cabin in the woods for a short intensive training period, at the end of which he makes his entry into everyday life as lodger at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Furriskey. There, Orlick reveals an inherited gift for writing, and it is decided by all the characters that he shall be the instrument of their revenge on Dermot Trellis by composing a counter-story in which Dermot is humiliated and destroyed. And the third set-piece is the narrative of Orlick Trellis, read to Furriskey, Lamont, and Shanahan.

Orlick is a consciously literary writer, dealing in fine phrases and subtle effects which naturally please his audience no better than the organ-music of Finn Mac Cool. They constantly interrupt him with demands for a short, crisp narrative in which Dermot Trellis meets a quick and unceremonious end. Orlick begins with an opening to the story that links Dermot Trellis decisively with King Sweeney; lying in bed in the early morning, he is disturbed by the ringing of a bell, and finds that a saintly cleric is taping out the measurement of a new church. The reader has barely time to note the parallel between the two suffering heroes, when the interruptions follow their familiar pattern.

> What? said Trellis. Who did you say you were? What was that noise? What is the ringing for?
>
> The bells of my acolyte, said the cleric. His voice was of a light quality and was unsupported by the majority of his wits, because these were occupied with the beauty of the round thing, its whiteness, its star-twinkle face.
>
> Eh?
>
> My acolytes are in your garden. They are taping the wallsteads of a sunbright church and ringing their bells in the morning.
>
> I beg your pardon, Sir, said Shanahan, but this is a bit too high up for us. This delay, I mean to say. The fancy stuff, couldn't you leave it out or make it short, Sir? Couldn't you give him a dose of something, give him a varicose vein in the bloody heart and get him out of that bed?
>
> Orlick placed his pen in the centre of his upper lip and exerted a gentle pressure by a movement of his head or hand, so that his lip was pushed upwards.
>
> *Result:* baring of teeth and gum.
>
> You overlook my artistry, he said. You cannot drop a man unless you first lift him. See the point?
>
> Oh, there's that too, of course, said Shanahan.
>
> Or a varicose vein across the scalp, said Furriskey, near the brain, you know. I believe that's the last.
>
> I saw a thing in a picture once, said Shanahan, a concrete-mixer, you understand, Mr. Orlick, and three of your men fall into it when it is working full blast, going like the hammers of hell.
>
> The mixture to be taken three times after meals, Lamont said laughing.
>
> You must have patience, gentlemen, counselled Orlick, the whiteness of a slim hand for warning.
>
> A concrete-mixer, said Shanahan.
>
> I'm after thinking of something good, something very good unless I'm very much mistaken, said Furriskey in an eager way, black in the labour of his fine thought. When you take our hero from the concrete-mixer, you put him on his back on the road and order full steam ahead with the steam-roller. . . .

Orlick begins again, still with the intention of having Trellis assault the cleric as Sweeney assaulted Ronan. But his audience will not accept the subject. ("You won't get very far by attacking the church.") He therefore makes a new start and brings in the Pooka MacPhellimey to haul Trellis out of bed and start him on a nightmare journey. From this point on, the parallel between Trellis and Sweeney is driven home. Their sufferings are described with the same blend of the horrific and the comical, and there are a number of verbal echoes which grapple the stories together.

At last Trellis is brought to trial, in a scene which reminds us both of Kafka and of the night-town section of *Ulysses* without ever swerving from its own individuality. The judges, a twelve-man board who also serve as jury, are made up of minor characters in Trellis' writings. The accusers range from William Tracey, author of *Flower o' the Prairie*, to a shorthorn cow who alleges that Trellis once caused acute discomfort by neglecting to milk her. The trial inexorably grinds on, with the Pooka acting as clerk of the court, and Trellis is about to be

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taken out and executed when he is saved by an accident. Teresa, the servant back at the Red Swan Hotel, goes into his bedroom and, finding it empty, begins to tidy up and throws some sheets of paper from the floor on to the fire. These happen to be the sheets of Trellis' novel which bring Furriskey and company into being. At once the trial scene dissolves and Trellis, exhausted and frightened, is standing in the street outside his house. He knocks and Teresa comes down to admit him.

> He was attired in his night-shirt, which was slightly discoloured as if by rain, and some dead leaves were attached to the soles of his poor feet. His eyes gleamed and he did not speak but walked past her in the direction of the stairs. He then turned and coughing slightly, stared at her as she stood there, the oil-lamp in her hand throwing strange shadows on her soft sullen face.
>
> Ah, Teresa, he muttered.
>
> Where were you in your night-shirt, Sir? she asked.
>
> I am ill, Teresa, he murmured. I have done too much thinking and writing, too much work. My nerves are troubling me. I have bad nightmares and queer dreams and I walk when I am asleep. I am very tired. The doors should be locked.
>
> You could easily get your death, Sir, Teresa said.

Without leaning on it too ponderously, it seems to me that Teresa is Ireland, in much the same way that the old woman who brings milk to the tower in the opening section of *Ulysses* is Ireland. Humble and unnoticed, with her "soft sullen face" and her cheap clothes, she is the bedrock reality that underlies all the memories and the mental conflicts. Trellis' sufferings, like Sweeney's, are imposed on him by the power of the imagination; Sweeney is specifically described at the beginning of the book as exposed to dishonour and suffering by "a story-teller," and Finn as "twisted and trampled and tortured for the weaving of a story-teller's book-web." Throughout the story, the imagination speaks unheeded; Shanahan and Lamont, with their repetitive, empty chatter, continually interrupt both Finn and Orlick, while the judges at Trellis' trial sit at a long bar with glasses of stout in their hands. The judgment of the saloon bar decides everything: is it fanciful to see in this an echo of the marrow-bone bitterness one finds in a poem like Yeats'—

> *All day I'd looked in the face*
> *What I had thought 'twould be*
> *To write for my own race,*
> *And the reality . . .?*

From this torment, Trellis is released by the simple action of a servant-girl who burns a few

CAMBRIDGE

The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy 1938-1965

ALAN WATT

Sir Alan Watt, a distinguished scholar and diplomat, speaks at first hand of the changes in direction and scope of Australian diplomatic activity during and after the Second World War. He discusses the controversial negotiations behind the formation of ANZUS and SEATO; Australian immigration policy; the implications of Sukarno's opposition to Malaysia; and the Chinese threat. 60*s. net*

George Crabbe: *Tales (1812)* and other Selected Poems

Edited by HOWARD MILLS

The largest available selection of the work of George Crabbe. The poems include *The Tales (1812)* complete, with substantial excerpts from *The Parish Register*, *The Borough* and other poems chosen to illustrate Crabbe's poetic development over 40 years. Crabbe's work is being increasingly studied. This representative and extremely generous selection will encourage a true critical appreciation.

Cloth 50*s. net; paperback* 16*s. net*

America in the Twentieth Century

D. K. ADAMS

Dr Adams traces the U.S.A.'s changing role in the world from a position of isolation to leader of the western world. He also examines the increasing initiative taken by the Federal Government in improving social conditions and ensuring civil rights for all citizens.

Cloth 30*s. net; paperback* 15*s. net*

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sheets of paper. And if Teresa, with her humble usefulness, saves Trellis, a similar *éclaircissement* happens in the enveloping narrative, where the nephew, having unexpectedly passed his examinations (a kind of trial with multiple judges) is greeted cordially by his uncle and Mr. Corcoran and feels a releasing warmth towards them.

THE IMAGINATION is wrong and leads to suffering: a simple, art-free life is best. Am I trying to impose this crude moral on *At Swim-Two-Birds*? Most certainly not. But the book is about Ireland, and Ireland is a country where the dream, the imagined role and the struck attitude, have always bulked larger than the pebble and clod of reality. The Irish are a small nation, but wherever there is a theatre there are Irish actors, and their poets have always been among the greatest; and for this power of projecting images there is a price to be paid. Yeats, whose shrewdness matched his poetic intensity, put his finger on this danger when he wrote, in *Ireland after Parnell*, that "No country could have more natural distaste for equality, for in every circle there was some man ridiculous for posing as the type of some romantic or distinguished trait."

The man who lives by the imagination, who is haunted by great memories that cannot be reduced to order, who sees the world in the colours cast over it by his dreams and longings, is doomed to suffer as Trellis and Finn and Sweeney suffer. He will be plagued by the Pooka, or by characters he has dreamed into being, or taken over from the dreams of other men; and he will be discussed and condemned over glasses of stout at a long bar. Shanahan and Lamont and Furriskey do not suffer in the same way, but neither are they immune; they are bemused, they consume their lives in repetitive talk which is deliberately related to the recitals of Finn. (Compare, for instance, the leaping of Sweeney and the hag with Lamont's story of the "jumping Irishman," Sergeant Craddock.)

O'Nolan was too much of an artist to make these points in a crude fashion. The book's impact is total. Its message is conveyed integrally, by everything that is said and done. The ironic flatness of the narrator's style, the uneventfulness of his life, are in utter contrast to the blended parody and lyricism of Finn's recitals, and also to the absurdity of the conversations between Furriskey, Shanahan, and Lamont. The three worlds are sealed off from each other, yet they go on existing side by side. And Ireland? A small, drab, orderly, modern country, haunted by an heroic past, dwarfed by an over-arching imaginative vision, its artists drinking pints of plain as the tourists walk up and down O'Connell Street and the fresh-faced country boys line up to emigrate to New York. Is there, anywhere, a better total description of Ireland than is conveyed in this book?

In case any Irishman reads this and is offended, I hasten to say that a total description of England, if one were ever achieved, would be no more flattering and certainly much less amusing. As for Wales and Scotland, they are both countries that cry out for an O'Nolan to attempt this kind of imaginative portrait. In the case of Wales, it is not difficult to blue-print the great book that might be written, if some writer with the comic talent of, say, Gwyn Thomas were also a poet who could weave material from the Mabinogion into his narrative, and make the two equally living. But the distance between Gwyn Thomas and the Mabinogion is the distance that has to be travelled; and who is to do it? In Scotland, one might perhaps say that the Lallans poets, with their insistence on assembling a vocabulary from every Scottish dialect and period, so that the language they finally arrived at was full of violent anachronisms, may have been motivated by an unformulated wish to achieve this multi-dimensional quality. But if so, all one can say is that it did not work very well. O'Nolan remains the master. He took a great deal from Joyce, as it was right and proper that he should; but he was always his own man.

I HAVE DESCRIBED *At Swim-Two-Birds* at perhaps tedious length, because it seems to me, in these days when modern literature is so intensively studied, just about the only real masterpiece in English that is far too little read and discussed (the two are not always the same thing) and I was hoping to engage the interest of likely readers who have not yet sampled it. But after all it seems to me an impossible thing to describe. So much of it is pure atmosphere, and the atmosphere could only be conveyed by a commentary of the same length as the book. One of the things my description has entirely failed to convey is how the book's allusiveness provides it with dozens of little tap-roots to the Irish literary and social memory. Such things as the literary evening at Byrne's: the structural function of this scene is merely that Byrne, the arbiter of taste, lays down the law that everyone ought to sleep much more, thus providing a link with the two reposeful characters, the narrator and Trellis. But the mere fact that he is called Byrne, given the same name as James Joyce's closest friend in his student days at the National University, gives one's memory a tiny jog, reminding one how near at hand is this crowd of powerful ghosts. And when the narrator, wishing to annoy his uncle by staying in his room

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for an extra few minutes when he knows the uncle is waiting to see him, opens a book to read a page or two, the book he chooses, and from which an extract is promptly woven into the tapestry of the scene, is Falconer's *Shipwreck*, and again something stirs in us and we remember that passage from Yeats' unforgettable description of his grandfather William Pollexfen: "He must have been ignorant, though I could not judge him in my childhood, for he had run away to sea when a boy, 'gone to sea through the hawse-hole,' as he put it, and I can but remember him with two books—his Bible and Falconer's *Shipwreck*, a little green-covered book that lay always on his table."

But enough of trying to describe the indescribable. O'Nolan's second and third novels, *The Hard Life* (1961) and *The Dalkey Archive* (1964) are both less ambitious and less successful than *At Swim-Two-Birds*, though they are well worth reading. O'Nolan's gift for comic extravaganza has not failed him; what does seem to have gone is his power of sustaining a large structure. Both books seem to lack a centre, a point to which all the threads can be pulled. One reads them easily and with enjoyment, but at the end one is left with a curious dissatisfaction, the feeling of having made a meal of fragments.

The Hard Life is sub-titled *An Exegesis of Squalor*; the word "exegesis" has a theological undertone, and indeed the book turns out to be curiously haunted by the portly ghost of Mother Church. Two young boys, deserted by their parents, are given a home by a Dublin citizen, Mr. Collopy, and his daughter, Annie. Mr. Collopy is another sketch of the lower-middle-class Dubliner, like the "uncle" of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, and the younger brother, who narrates the book, is like the nephew in being quiet, reserved, and fond of lying in bed. The elder brother, however, is a new departure into satirical farce: he is a restless projector and speculator, like a youthful Irish version of Wells' Ponderevo, launching money-making schemes in rapid succession. The schemes turn out well for him but badly for other people; for instance, he sells a tightrope-walking set, complete with grappling irons and special boots, and a boy who buys one and tries it out is injured and almost drowned.

"The brother" soon leaves for London and continues his operations on a larger scale; the central section of the book elaborates on the relationship between Mr. Collopy and a comical German Jesuit named Father Fahrt. Chapter 10, one of O'Nolan's set-pieces, consists of a long conversation between the two old cronies as they sit by the stove with a crock of whisky. This conversation, in which Mr. Collopy vigorously belabours the Jesuit order and Father Fahrt mildly but firmly defends it, is not only a high spot in the book but of wide general significance for O'Nolan's work, and we shall return to it later. At the moment it is sufficient to note that the two plots run side by side. "The brother" continues his up-to-date schemes for making money, and Mr. Collopy grimly pursues an objective that has become the chief ambition of his life. What this objective is, we are never explicitly told; but it is made clear enough by various hints and references that Mr. Collopy wants Dublin to be adequately supplied with women's urinals. To this end he rails against the city council, he organises a committee, and finally, in company with Father Fahrt, he goes to Rome and manages to secure an interview with the Holy Father himself. Meanwhile, Mr. Collopy has been trying to alleviate his rheumatism by taking a patent medicine advertised and supplied by "the brother." This medicine, known as Gravid Water, has the unexpected effect of making him so enormously heavy that when climbing up some wooden steps he falls through and is killed. The book ends with the reading of Mr. Collopy's will and a brief visit from the entirely unrepentant brother. He cynically advises the narrator to consider marriage to Annie, who has been left with a house

BEYOND BELIEF
a chronicle of murder and its detection
EMLYN WILLIAMS
42s net
HAMISH HAMILTON

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and an income. The narrator's reaction to this is to be sick, and in his "tidal surge of vomit" the book ends.

The Dalkey Archive has the same kind of extravagant plot. Two young Dubliners—Michael Shaughnessy, the narrator, and his friend Hackett, a kind of scaled-down Buck Mulligan—are returning from a bathe in the sea at Dalkey when they come upon a man named De Selby, who has cut his foot and needs help to get back to his isolated house. He asks them in for a drink, and reveals himself as a scientist who has invented a way of abolishing time and also destroying all forms of life on the earth, both of which he intends to carry out. To prevent this, Mick arranges with Sergeant Fottrell, the local representative of the law, that the two of them shall break into De Selby's house one night and steal his supply of the substance known as D.M.P., with which De Selby intends to drain the air of oxygen and thus destroy life and annihilate time. They do this, and subsequently De Selby's house is burnt down and gutted (by Hackett?) while its owner is away in London. Meanwhile, two other actions develop. Mick confides the story of De Selby to his girl-friend, Mary; a cool and sensible girl, she finds the tale incredible but nevertheless feels enough concern to make arrangements, over his head, for Mick to receive the aid of a priest in the shape of a certain Father Cobble, S.J. Mick is slightly nonplussed by this but accepts her decision and not only sees Father Cobble himself but arranges for him to talk to De Selby. The two of them visit De Selby at home, and he receives them courteously but craftily evades the subject of his plan for world destruction.

Another action now develops. From a local doctor with whom he sometimes drinks in a quiet bar at Dalkey, Mick learns that James Joyce is still alive and hiding himself in seclusion in the little watering-place of Skerries. Mick resolves to seek Joyce out, not only because of his veneration for the great Irish writer but because it suggests a way out of the problem of dealing with De Selby. After all, he and Sergeant Fottrell can steal De Selby's supply of D.M.P., but how can De Selby be prevented from manufacturing a new supply and starting again? For "his Christian conscience forbade the simple killing of De Selby," even to save the world.

In an interesting passage of self-examination, Mick ranges in order the problems that confront him and decides that if Joyce really is alive, and can be brought to the acquaintance of De Selby, the result might be an intellectual confusion of such gigantic proportions as to prevent either of them from doing anything at all during the remainder of their lives.

> Assuming he met Joyce and won his confidence, could the contretemps... be resolved by bringing together De Selby and Joyce and inducing both to devote their considerable brains in consultation to some recondite, involuted and incomprehensible literary project, ending in publication of a book which would be commonly ignored and thus be no menace to universal sanity? Would Joyce take to De Selby, and vice versa? Does a man reciprocally accept a dissimilar madness?

Partly with this object in mind, and partly in the hope of pleasing Mary, who is of a literary bent, Mick wanders about Skerries and at last finds James Joyce serving behind the counter in a quiet, old-fashioned public house. Another surprise is in store. Joyce is a devout Catholic. His literary work was no more than a *jeu d'esprit*; it began and ended with *Dubliners*, written in collaboration with Oliver St. John Gogarty, who at the last moment refused to allow his name to appear on the title-page because it might ruin his professional career in medicine. The encounter becomes more wildly funny as it develops:

> —Very interesting. But what else have you written, mainly?
>
> Joyce quietly attended to the ash of his cigar.
>
> —So far as print is concerned, mostly pamphlets for the Catholic Truth Society of Ireland. I am sure you know what I mean—those little tracts that can be had from a stand inside the door of any church; on marriage, the sacrament of penance, humility, the dangers of alcohol.
>
> Mick stared.
>
> —You surprise me.
>
> —Now and again, of course, I attempted something more ambitious. In 1926 I had a biographical piece on Saint Cyril, Apostle of the Slavs, published in *Studies*, the Irish Jesuit quarterly. Under an assumed name, of course.
>
> —Yes. But *Ulysses*?
>
> There was a low sound of impatience in the gloom.
>
> —I don't want to talk about that exploit. I took the idea to be a sort of practical joke but didn't know enough about it to suspect it might seriously injure my name. It began with an American lady in Paris by the name of Sylvia Beach. I know it's a horrible phrase, I detest it, but the truth is that she fell in love with me. Fancy that!
>
> He smiled bleakly.
>
> —She had a bookshop which I often visited in connection with a plan to translate and decontaminate great French literature so that it could be an inspiration to the Irish, besotted with Dickens, Cardinal Newman, Walter Scott and Kickham. My eye had a broad range—Pascal and Descartes, Rimbaud, de Musset, Verlaine, Balzac, even that holy Franciscan, Benedictine and medical man, Rabelais...!
>
> —Interesting. But *Ulysses*?
>
> —Curious thing about Baudelaire and Mal-

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

larmé—both were obsessed with Edgar Allen Poe.

—How did Miss Beach express her love for you?

—Ah-ha! Who is Sylvia? She swore to me that she'd make me famous. She didn't at the beginning say how, and anyhow I took it all patiently as childish talk. But her plot was to have this thing named *Ulysses* concocted, secretly circulated and have the authorship ascribed to me. Of course at first I didn't take the mad scheme seriously.

—But how did the thing progress?

—I was shown bits of it in typescript. Artificial and laborious stuff, I thought. I just couldn't take much interest in it, even as a joke by amateurs. I was immersed in those days in what was intrinsically good behind the bad in Scaliger, Voltaire, Montaigne, and even that queer man Villon. But how well-attuned they were, I thought, to the educated Irish mind. Ah, yes. Of course it wasn't Sylvia Beach who showed me those extracts.

—Who was it?

—Various low, dirty-minded ruffians who had been paid to put this material together. Muckrakers, obscene poets, carnal pimps, sodomous sycophants, pedlars of the coloured lusts of fallen humanity. Please don't ask me for names.

Joyce has one ambition: to spend what remains of his life in a religious order, preferably the Society of Jesus. From this point on, the object of getting him entangled with De Selby is quietly dropped, and Mick arranges for Joyce, in his turn, to be confronted by Father Cobble. The meeting between them is the great hilarious climax of the book; having already given away enough of the plot, I will say no more, except that Mick hurries away from the scene leaving Joyce and Cobble together, comforting himself with the thought that Joyce is now in hands well qualified to take care of him. The book ends with the focus on Mary. After a long and vague relationship with Mick, she appears to be on the point of leaving him to marry Hackett; this is averted, she and Mick agree to marry, and the last words of the book are her utterly unexpected remark: "I'm certain I'm going to have a baby."

WE CAN TELL from these two novels, as we could not from *At Swim-Two-Birds*, that O'Brien, whether or not he was a Catholic *croyant et pratiquant*, was deeply interested in Christian doctrine and church organisation. Both novels are loaded with Catholic lore to an extent to which my rapid summaries give no clue.

The dialogue between Mr. Collopy and Father Fahrt, for instance, in Chapter 10 of *The Hard Life*, could only have been written by someone to whom the beliefs and activities of the Catholic Church were of absorbing interest. Mr. Collopy gives vent to all the familiar abuse of Jesuits on the grounds of their wealth, worldliness, hypocrisy, and casuistry. It is wonderfully cathartic, and must be especially so to anyone who went through a Jesuit education. But Father Fahrt is always there to correct the wild exaggerations and put the Jesuit case.

—Oh now you can always trust a Jesuit to make mischief and complicate simple things.

—That word Jesuit. Our founder Ignatius was a Spaniard and had a different name for the Order, but it was called Societas Jesu by command of the Holy Father Paul III. Originally the title Jesuit was one of hatred and contempt. What was intended as an insult we accepted as a compliment.

—I suppose that's what I mean—you are for ever double-thinking and double-talking. You slither everywhere like quicksilver. There's no pinning a Jesuit down. Then we're told it is a mendicant order. Sure there isn't a better-got collection of men on the face of the earth, churches and palaces all over the world. I know a thing or two. I've read books. I'll tell you something about 35 Lower Leeson Street, the poor cave you hid in yourself.

—What?

—The emaciated friars in that place have red wine with their dinners. That's more than Saint

Dilemmas of Social Reform

Poverty and Community Action in the United States

PETER MARRIS and MARTIN REIN

'Peter Marris and Martin Rein studied obstacles to reform in the attempts made by the Ford Foundation and by the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency to promote community action during the years 1960 to 1964. They have made out of their experience a fascinating and instructive book which raises tough and illuminating questions.' – ALASDAIR MACINTYRE, *Guardian*

A report of the Institute of Community Studies. 35s

ROUTLEDGE & KEGAN PAUL

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Peter himself had. But Saint Peter got himself into a sort of a divarsion with a cock. The holy fathers below in Clongowes Wood know all about cocks, too. They have them roasted and they eat them at dinner. And they are great men for scoffing claret.

—Such talk is most unworthy. We eat and drink according to our means. The suggestion that we are, well . . . sybarites and gluttons is nonsense. And offensive nonsense, Collopy. I do not like such talk.

—Well, is that so? Mr. Collopy said testily. Is criticising the Jesuits a new sin? Would you give somebody five rosaries in the confessional for that? Faith then, if criticising the Jesuits is a fall from grace, let us say a Hail Mary for the repose of the soul of Pope Paul IV, for he told Ignatius Loyola that there were a lot of things wrong with the Order that would have to be put right. Did you know that? And did Ignatius bend the knee in front of the Holy Father? Not on your life. Give me your damn glass.

—Thanks. I do not say that Ignatius was without fault. Neither was Peter. But Ignatius was canonised in 1622 by Pope Gregory XV, only sixty-six years after his death. He is now in Paradise.

—You know he died without the last rites?

—I do. He was called suddenly. He was weak of body but his labours in this world were prodigious, and nobody can take from him credit for the great deed of founding the Order, which is now and ever has been the intellectual vanguard of the Catholic Church.

—I wouldn't say the story is quite so simple as that, Father Fahrt. By Dad, the same Order caused a lot of bad bloody ructions at one time.

—The Fathers are all over the world, they speak and write in all languages, they have built a wonderful apparatus for the propagation of the faith.

—Some people at one time thought they were trying to banjax and bewilder the One, Holy and Apostolic. Oh and there are good people who are alive today and think the Church had a very narrow escape from the boyos of yesteryear.

—I know it is useless asking who those important people are.

Father Fahrt is comical enough, and the whole scene is a joke, but it is not the kind of joke that would occur to a non-Catholic. The same is true of the extraordinary scene in which the pair obtain an audience with the Pope, and Mr. Collopy appeals to His Holiness for aid in increasing the number of conveniences for the ladies of Dublin. The Pope's startled replies are given in his own words, a mixture of Latin (when he remembers his dignity) and Italian (when he is shocked into ordinary scolding), and also in a translation supposedly provided by His Holiness' secretary, one Father Cahill. O'Nolan's outrageous dead-pan humour, a wild mixture of farce and scholarship, reaches a peak in this scene.

Collopy spoke.

The Pope

Che cosa sta dicendo questo poveretto?

What is this poor child trying to say?

Monsignor Cahill spoke.

The Pope

E tocco? Nonnunquam urbis nostrae visitentium capitibus affert vaporem. Dei praesidium hujus infantis amantissimi invocare velimus.

Is this child in his senses? Sometimes the heat of our city brings a vapour into the heads. We invoke God's protection for a beloved child.

Collopy spoke again.

Monsignor Cahill spoke.

The Pope

Ho paura che abbiate fatto un errore, Eminenza, nel potar qui questo pio uomo. Mi sembra che sia un po'tocco. Forse gli manca una rotella. Ha sbagliato indirizzo? Non siamo medici che curano il corpo.

Dear Cardinal, I fear you have made a mistake in bringing this pious man to see us. I fear the Lord has laid a finger on him. We would not say that his head is working properly. Can it be that he is in the wrong place? We are not a doctor for the body.

Father Fahrt spoke.

The Pope

Ma questo e semplicemente mostruoso. Neque hoc nostrum officium cum concilii urbani officio est confundendum.

But this is monstrous. Nor should our office be confused with that of a city council.

This is not, as anti-clerical satire would be, founded on the notion that the Papacy in itself is funny, that an audience with the Pope is an absurdity. On the contrary, its humour arises from the abrupt collision between the quaint fanaticism of Mr. Collopy and the seriousness and dignity of the Papal presence.

If I, with my Protestant background and lack of systematic religious beliefs, find these passages funny, I should expect a Catholic to find them funnier still, unless he was entirely lacking in humour, in which case I should expect him to demand that the books should be put on the Index. In either event, the point is the same. This is Catholic writing, about Catholic matters, no less so than a full-scale attack like *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or a full-scale affirmation like the novels of G. K. Chesterton.

In *The Dalkey Archive*, theological argument abounds, and there are even hints, as we shall see, of an over-arching Christian symbolism. When De Selby is able to summon up the presence of St. Augustine, he engages him in an argument that is very reminiscent of Mr. Collopy's wrangle with Father Fahrt.

De Selby himself is no unbeliever. He has heretical opinions, condemns the Church strongly and thinks that universal destruction of mankind is the only way to prevent God's

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

word from becoming more and more distorted by wilful human foolishness. And James Joyce, when he appears, is very much the lifelong amateur theologian. He early reveals to Mick that a great part of his motive for wishing to become a Jesuit is to reform that order and, through it, the Church, by freeing them from the doctrine of the Trinity. To him, God is of two Persons, and the Holy Spirit was "the invention of the more reckless of the early Fathers." To Mick's timid remonstrance Joyce returns an unyielding scorn.

> I always understood that God was of three Divine Persons.
>
> —Well you didn't get up early enough in the morning, my lad. The Holy Ghost was not officially invented until the Council of Constantinople in 381.

Joyce is a theologian, De Selby is a theologian; even the lout Hackett is a theologian when he has a drink inside him. Hackett's ambition, at such times, is to rehabilitate the apocryphal Gospel of Judas Iscariot. "All the obloquy heaped on him is based on nothing but inference. I hope to have part of the Bible rewritten." Land of saints and scholars!

The Dalkey Archive is, in fact, more thoroughly permeated with Catholicism, and Christianity generally, than *The Hard Life*. The local pub, in which the characters meet and where Mick first hears of the continued existence of James Joyce, is called the Colza Hotel, because its landlady, Mrs. Laverty, "... was a most religious woman and once had a talk with a neighbour about the red lamp suspended in the church before the high altar. When told it was sustained with colza oil, she piously assumed that this was a holy oil used for miraculous purposes by Saint Colza, VM [Virgin Martyr], and decided to put her house under this banner."

Even Sergeant Fottrell's personal obsession has a theological flavour. The Sergeant, like Mr. Collopy, has an object in life to which he gives his best energies. It is to save the human race from the bicycle. He believes that the interchange of molecules between man and bicycle, caused by frequent contact, is resulting in a new breed of men who are partly bicycle and bicycles who are partly men, and he has declared war on the velocipede in consequence. Is there not a theological flavour about this? Doesn't it recall, in its farcical way, the various doctrines of transubstantiation?

There are even hints that the colourless Mick, who is thrust suddenly into the position of having to act and perhaps sacrifice himself for the good of all humanity, is a kind of miniature Christ. The last sentence of the novel is relevant here, since Christianity itself began with Mary's saying "I'm certain I'm going to have a baby." Earlier on it has been specifically stated that Mary is a virgin, at any rate as far as Mick is concerned. Is she pregnant by Hackett? Or by someone unknown in the story? Or is a deeper symbolism involved?

If so, one can only say that it fails of its effect. Neither *The Hard Life* nor *The Dalkey Archive* has the authority and inclusiveness of *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Both books seem to toy with symbolic overtones rather than genuinely incorporate them. They pick their way round the edges of vitally important subjects rather than going hell-for-leather through the middle. And this realisation gives us a vantage point to look back on *At Swim-Two-Birds*, noting clearly now its elegiac quality, its all-pervading sense that the problems posed by time are not soluble. This is the difference between O'Nolan and his ultimate master James Joyce. Joyce's work is bleak, but it is not elegiac. It affirms the stature of man. The eighteen hours of Leopold Bloom's life which we follow in *Ulysses* are full of shabbiness, failure, and discouragement, but they are also Homeric. Joyce's purpose in elaborating his technique of literary *son et lumière* was to affirm that his wandering Jewish salesman was no less important than Odysseus. By contrast, O'Nolan's parallels between Trellis and Sweeney, between the bardic feast and the paralytic loquacity of the saloon bar, are parallels of helplessness. So that O'Nolan remains a writer whose subject is not man, but Irishman. He wrote for his own race: one can say "for," rather than "of," because he was one of the few modern Irish writers who have stayed on in their own country and not put a safe distance between themselves and their homeland before beginning to write. But how much it is, to write for one's own race! And how difficult, when that race is as dispossessed, as melancholy and as inspired as the Irish!

When, early in 1966, the news came that O'Nolan had died, I felt both saddened and amazed. Saddened that the possibility of a second great book from his pen was now quenched: amazed that he was only in his earlier fifties. He must have been so young when *At Swim-Two-Birds* came to him; it must have formed in his mind, shaking him with laughter and dismay, at a time when he was no older than the two of us who stared down at his book, knowing that a new chapter in our own history was beginning, that morning in the Eagle and Child. *Vale.*

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AUTHORS & CRITICS

Where Freud-Bullitt Went Wrong

FREUD-BULLITT is a bad book. This is the almost unanimous opinion of reviewers, including the analyst Erik Erikson, the historian Richard Hofstadter, and the literary critic George Steiner; and I agree. A reader with no knowledge of Freudianism or of Woodrow Wilson would be irritated by its vaguely explained genesis, its lack of references, its dogmatic assertions (*e.g.*, that until his first wife's death Wilson "had not the slightest sexual interest in any other woman"[1]), and above all its constant denigration of Wilson's physique, his intellect, his motives. The authors grudgingly concede that a man of Wilson's temperament might be capable of considerable achievement. But the achievement is so slighted that the ordinary reader is left with a puzzle as big as the ones Freud and Bullitt set out to solve: namely, how could a creature so neurotic, so nearly psychotic, have risen so high?

To anyone well acquainted with Wilson's life the Freud-Bullitt account is grotesquely warped and inadequate. He is damned both for refusing to play politics, and for playing them (as in the mention of his break with his backer Colonel Harvey: compare the contemptuous paragraph in Freud-Bullitt, p. 147, with the careful assessment in Arthur Link, *Wilson: The Road to the White House*, pp. 359–78). Wilson is accused of unfailing superciliousness and of the worst forms of Puritanism, when in fact he had a relish for jokes and limericks, once acted as a football coach, and liked baseball and golf, the theatre, popular music and detective stories. These errors, unimportant in themselves, typify the approach of Freud-Bullitt's portentous yet superficial book. The authors attribute to Wilson's individual make-up elements which pertain to the whole career-style of his age. Woodrow Wilson may have expressed a hidden resentment of his clergyman father by entering the law instead of the ministry. But such muted rebellions within professional families have been common for at least a century. The transition from the church to the bar was an easy one, involving the least possible rebellion. Wilson may have had an exceptional appetite for oral activities, as Freud-Bullitt claim. (What a pity for their thesis that he did not smoke a pipe!) His passion for oratory was hardly exceptional: what of Ignatius Donnelly, William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, indeed almost every public figure of the period?

Freud-Bullitt is a harmful as well as a bad book. Because of its oddly clandestine evolution it tends to focus discussion on the book itself, instead of on Wilson, as a "case"—somewhat as the fact of Kennedy's assassination, the prime dreadful fact, tends to be lost sight of in a welter of post-mortems. The Freud-Bullitt book is like some capsule of objects deposited for the future but opened prematurely, and so neither "contemporary" nor "historical." Its musty contents fail to embrace any consideration of work done on Wilson in the last thirty years: the studies by Arthur Link, for example, or—more immediately relevant—the "personality study" of *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House*, published by Alexander and Juliette George in 1956.[2] Freud-Bullitt diverts attention from an important question which it might have illuminated: whether psycho-analysis *has* uncovered general truths and provided a method of applying these to figures of the past.

LET US TURN from Freud-Bullitt to the wider issue. The response of the orthodox historian to psycho-analysis would run more or less as follows:

History is a combination of art and science. Its aim is to elucidate the past, but this must be modestly interpreted. There are no universal historical laws. The scientific aspect of history

[1] When Wilson (a married man) was in Bermuda, recuperating from an illness in 1907, he met a vivacious widow, Mary Peck, later mentioned in gossip as one of his "Peckadilloes." One Sunday, returning from a walk, they were confronted by the congregation emerging from a church at which Wilson had preached. "This is terrible," he told her in mock-horror. "Last week, dressed in solemn black, I stood up before that congregation and admonished them about their Christian duty—and here I am today standing, just like an undergrad, under a tree with a pretty girl." Arthur Walworth, *Woodrow Wilson* (1958, 1965), vol. I, p. 100. Wilson had other women friends. It is doubtful whether he ever had love affairs with them. This is not to say there was absolutely no "sexual interest" for him in these friendships.

[2] Available in a paperback edition (Dover, N.Y., Constable, London, 1964).

MARCUS CUNLIFFE *is Professor of American Studies at the University of Sussex. He is the author of* The Literature of the United States *(1954), a biography of George Washington and is currently completing a book on American military attitudes. The Freud-Bullitt study of Wilson has been published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson (London) and Houghton Mifflin (Boston).*

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

consists in the scrupulous collection and verification of data. Beyond that, much remains unprovable and even unknowable. The skilled historian who acquires a "feel" for a problem is often able to confirm the truth of his hunches on particular points. This gives him an exhilarating assurance that he is on the right track, attuned, through knowledge and sympathy. But he must beware of overreaching himself. The best generalisation is a limited one: large generalities and comparisons are useless. Namier is an example of the historian's historian, Toynbee of the historian's non-historian. The art aspect of history consists in narrative skill, and in a humanistic regard for men in their social context. There is a double obligation: to respect the evidence, and in a custodial sense to respect the dead. Respect for the evidence entails a desire to be rigorous without being pedantic, and to be reasonably bold without becoming rash. Respect for the dead entails a desire (perhaps unwitting) to commemorate, without lapsing into the attendant dangers of jingoism and sentimentality.

In such a formulation, psycho-analysis offends as rashness, tinctured with denigration. Perhaps unfairly, since the average historian knows little of Freudian or neo-Freudian ideas, he holds that what is true in psycho-analysis is not new, and that what is new is not true (or at least not usefully true for him). This view, for instance, is firmly stated by Page Smith (*The Historian and History*, Knopf, 1964, pp. 121–33), an American scholar who has taken the trouble to familiarise himself with the issues. Smith believes that the investigation of Wilson by the Georges adds little to an understanding that could be arrived at without recourse to psycho-analysis. Other historians might say that what is acceptable in Freudianism has long formed part of humanistic wisdom. The fate of Oedipus haunted Europe for centuries. *Hamlet* is anterior to and more profound than the analysis of it by Freud's disciple Ernest Jones. Or there is that famous assertion in Diderot's *Neveu de Rameau* (written in the 1760s):

> If your little savage were left to himself and to his native blindness, he would in time join the infant's reasoning to the grown man's passions —he would strangle his father and sleep with his mother.

In short, Shakespeare and Sophocles have already told us the worst. The historian as humanist can delve as far into human motive as it is feasible to go. Reflection upon other self-willed, ambitious, vulnerable characters in history and in literature would suffice to reveal the pattern in Woodrow Wilson's life: his need for flattery and approval; his superb certainty and energy when his leadership was accepted and he had convinced himself of the rightness of a line of action; his inability to compromise; his physical collapses; his abandonment of followers like Colonel House when they tried to lead him.

On the second point of psycho-analysis, its novelty, the historian might maintain that even if provably true, the analyst's generalisations are of the wrong scale and order for his purposes. What can he do with the notion that the individual personality-growth epitomises the history of the race? "History" of this sort is not his. Or with Freud's theory (in *Totem and Taboo*) of the origin of society resting in the "primal horde" whose father-leader is killed by his sons? The average academic historian could retort that such a theory helps him not in the least in investigating, say, the rise of two-party systems or (except as a joke) the failure of Home Rule. A more thoughtful objection might be that the theory of the primal horde, while possibly of value to the anthropologist, is to the historian interesting only as a theory, to be analysed in the fullness of time as an episode in the history of thought—as one might explore, say, the history of the idea of the Social Contract, of which it might in fact appear to be a latter-day variant.[8]

So much for standard historical answers. Historians are however generally less smug than I have implied. Some feel challenged by all the social sciences. Have they been too timid, eschewing possible new ranges of insight? Has fear of rashness trapped them in pedantry? Has their custodial function made them too cosily conventional? If Freud-Bullitt is at one extreme rash and denigratory, what are we to say, at the other extreme, of a work like Arthur Link's multi-volume biography of Woodrow Wilson? It has occupied him for a quarter of a century and is still not finished. It is lucid, judicious, encyclopaedic. It is intelligent and readable. The trouble is that it will not be read, except by other scholars of the period: it will merely be referred to, for that is the fate of encyclopaedias. Link's is a work of dedication, a monumental work. Significant, commemorative words. One dedicates a monument; but you can do little with it except admire it and note its symbolic weight. Professor Link's endeavour is heroic: neither in intention nor effect is it intellectually exciting. If he is angered by the Freud-Bullitt book, as he may justifiably be, and is stimulated to reply at length, this may oddly enough

[8] It could be pointed out that Freud was never dogmatically committed to his own theories. The Diderot quotation was well known to him; he himself conceded that the primal horde might be related to the Social Contract. But a critic could retort that such concessions prove the openness rather than the incisiveness of Freud's intellect.

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

constitute one of his best contributions to Wilsoniana. If so, we may feel that the historical discipline is, by the very terms on which it has established itself, somewhat inert—an absorber rather than a generator of ideas.

SUCH THOUGHTS have exercised a number of historians. Some of the best, including Richard Hofstadter, have been quick to follow lines opened up by sociologists and social psychologists. Several have shown a willingness to come to terms with psycho-analysis. Other social scientists, notably Philip Rieff, have pointed out how much history and psycho-analysis have in common, since both are rooted in the past, and since psycho-analysis shares with non-Marxist history an awareness of the stubborn complexity of the human condition.[4] Numerous gestures of amity and collaboration have been made, especially in the United States, where the academic disciplines are more ready than in Europe to send emissaries to one another with a view to cooling-off agreements and friendship pacts. I have attended some of these warm-hearted gatherings and have enthused with the rest.

The results have been disappointing, for all the aspiration. One reason, of course, is that even in the single case of history different social sciences like sociology and psychology pull the would-be practitioner in different directions. At any rate there is so far little to show, even in the likeliest field, biography. One instance is W. B. Willcox's investigation some years back of Henry Clinton, the British general of the American Revolutionary War. Like the Georges' study of Wilson and House (which incidentally is far superior to Freud-Bullitt), the Willcox biography is embellished, not transformed by Freudianism. We applaud the authors' modesty and open-mindedness, but cannot help wondering whether what they take for prolegomena to a full Freudian exercise are not instead the dead end of a short road. The most distinguished, neo-Freudian essay in an almost non-existent genre has been Erik Erikson's *Young Man Luther* (1958). But Luther is an exceptional case of what Erikson sees as the identity crisis. There is no sign that comparable studies are in train.

How disheartening for those scholars who have met in conferences and colloquia, yearning to make common cause. One may be tempted to conclude that the orthodox historians were correct after all to prefer the risk of dullness to the risk of daftness. Perhaps they were right for the wrong reasons; sluggishness may appear wisdom if one hangs on long enough for new fashions to fade out. Perhaps they were right, even if they did not deserve to be right, in maintaining that for historians motive must always be subordinate to event: in the necessary proportions of the discipline, explaining why something happened is possibly bound to take less space than explaining what happened.

THERE IS A KINDRED difficulty, well brought out in Philip Rieff's critique of Freud-Bullitt [ENCOUNTER, April] and in some of his earlier essays. Freudian approaches emphasise the individual, private, aberrant circumstance. Historians, even when concerned with revolutions or with mass hysteria, emphasise the public circumstance. To the historian, no matter what may be the hidden motives of the actors in a given situation, they are actors almost in the sense that they are reading lines prescribed for them by external, societal factors. Crises, alliances and hostilities, starkly posed alternatives oblige the actors to perform in certain ways. Moreover, this public activity may to the historian create an outer personality, an exterior realm, not necessarily akin to the inner or at any rate not dominated by it. The policeman on his beat may differ significantly from the off-duty being at home in his carpet slippers. The demands of the public role may supply a genuine outer identity, as much a part of the human psyche as the carapace for a crab. The historian must deal primarily with this daytime round, when the world's business is being transacted. He may not admire what he examines. He must though come to terms with its clamouring realities; and in so doing must in a way dignify and commemorate his material. To deny the surface reality, to confine oneself to night-time imperatives, is to belittle the public, societal realm, and thereby denigrate it. In this respect a historian, unlike a poet or an analyst, resembles a lawyer. His material is his client, whose case he is obliged to present seriously. It is not possible to be a cynic and a major historian. The historian's side of Voltaire had no hesitation in describing the age of Louis XIV as "a splendid century."

SO THERE IS NO dazzling revelation to be provided by psycho-analysis. It cannot totally illuminate any single person, still less a group of persons, of the past. As a biographical aid it may even seem to conform to an old-fashioned historical conception, of the Great-Man-in-History, which it merely inverts: the Great-Man-as-Fraud. Certainly Lytton Strachey, and

[4] The discussion is conveniently laid out in Bruce Mazlish, ed., *Psycho-analysis and History* (Spectrum, 1963). See also Stuart Hughes, "History and Psychoanalysis" in his *History as Art and as Science* (Harper, 1964)—a sympathetic, knowledgeable essay; and Philip Rieff, "History, Psychoanalysis, and the Social Sciences," reprinted in Edward N. Saveth, ed., *American History and the Social Sciences* (Free Press of Glencoe, 1964).

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY *and the Labour Party each has its Utopian myth, which is often remote from the realities of day-to-day politics. But it is essential that the active politician should identify this myth with the machine in which he works. Thus, the public discussion of great issues becomes a duel between two rival, partisan and highly distorted interpretations of history and of current events. If you ask any politician his private view, he will usually admit to you that these partisan interpretations are unfair. In fact the democratic system cannot work without incessant public suppressions of personal conviction. Any member of a Cabinet, for instance, may have to argue passionately for a particular policy in secret and then, when the decision is taken against him, have to argue in public for the view he has condemned a few hours before. And this kind of distortion and suppression is not limited to Ministers. It is easy enough for a backbencher in the Commons, or a party spokesman outside, to support the machine when he thinks it right. The test of loyalty comes when he is asked to support it, knowing it to be in the wrong.*

R. H. S. CROSSMAN

ON LEARNING IN STOCKHOLM *that canvassing in one's own interest was possible, I asked my Nobel Prize Academician point-blank: what about me? He raised his eyebrows and asked me why I wanted it. Well, I replied, it was good propaganda, it helps one to get along, and I should also like the money, provided it was tax-free. He told me that in England it was tax-free. He might vote for me—he added on further reflection—and there were two elderly members who would vote for absolutely anyone. That made three. He felt, however, that to persuade the remaining fifteen members "would take time"—as he put it. So the only reliable information I can give about this year's award is that I am not going to get it. Not this year, anyway.*

GEORGE MIKES

TECHNIQUES CHANGE, *but grand themes do not. Whether in a murder trial, a bullfight, a farce like* Charley's Aunt *or a tragedy like* Lear, *the behaviour of a human being at the end of his tether is the common denominator of all drama. When a man (or woman) arrives at self-knowledge through desperation, he (or she) has become the raw material for a great play. The stature of the work will depend on the dramatist's honesty and skill, but its cornerstone is already laid.*

KENNETH TYNAN

WE HAVE GOT TO WATCH *our standards; there are more ways than one of falling for a systematised second-rate imitation of the first-rate. Maybe we should imitate Bentley telling Pope that his translation was "a very pretty poem but you must not call it Homer." But I doubt if Pope's "Homer" did much harm to the real Homer and I can't get adequately upset by Hollywood or Elstree Shakespeare. We have no real reason to believe that a mass culture has ever been highly critical. As long as we try to keep our own, old standards (risking, if any risk is to be taken, more enthusiasm than new work may, in the long run, turn out to deserve), but avoiding the mischief of mixing levels of achievements, overestimating entertainers like Rodgers and Hammerstein (or Trollope to cite another though less extravagant case of over-valuation), the battle is not lost.*

D. W. BROGAN

IN CALIFORNIA, *with the World's Greatest Drugstore always close at hand, parodies suggest themselves to the reader. In that bright land of syncretism, might there not be a Drugstore for the Soul, built in Indian or Aztec style, supplying the wisdoms of the East in the new synthetic forms, the spiritual antibiotics which will destroy any streptococcus of egotism, if taken three times a week? Alcohol is only the soul's old-fashioned tonic, tobacco a mild syrup; we can do better with the new sulphonamides for the soul, now that the old moulds of religion can be happily synthetised. The Universities should co-operate, and abandon their dreary book-learning. One might even have a World Medical Research Council for the Soul, so that the density of egotism can be everywhere carefully correlated with the effects of synthetic Zen.*

STUART HAMPSHIRE

THE TRADITIONAL RESPECT *for the Japanese professor, the* sensei. *"In this country," a lively and successful business man tells me, "we have immense respect for the* sensei." *I must look a little sceptical, for he adds suspiciously, "You are much too business-like for our idea of a* sensei."

It was he who, as a governor of the Kobe university, offered us a house on a mountain, a difficult half an hour's walk from public transport. I hinted that we had come to Japan to see Japan and not the top of a mountain. He was surprised: "But you're supposed to be a poet, aren't you?" Now we live in a popular district, with little wooden boxes springing up all round us, and crying babies and starving animals, and the sky has almost disappeared. Sometimes we wonder if we shouldn't have settled for the mountain hermitage.

Respect for the sensei. *More money and less respect—as in Europe—might be preferable.*

D. J. ENRIGHT

IN FRANCE, *there is politics. And then there is the state. They are two very different things.*

For decades France has been seeking a working political arrangement, without finding one; and the observer who sees only the façade—the cabinet, parliament, and the parties—wonders how a country in so chaotic a political condition can exist at all, let alone pretend to be a Great Power. The explanation is to be found in the fact that the administration of the state functions so well—or rather, for well or ill, with so automatic a routine—that the only sphere of activity it concedes to politics is that of pure and irrelevant ideology.

HERBERT LUETHY

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

debunking biographers of the 1920s like W. E. Woodward, drew upon Freudianism for denigratory purposes.

But there is more to be said. Psychology, in the general sense of the word, has in fact already gained wide acceptance; its cumulative if sometimes contradictory message has been absorbed into the mental equipment of all serious scholars. The best of our historians recognise that public events cannot be fully understood without an awareness of their private features: the nighttime as well as the daytime of the human mind. We are now interested in a broader view of what constitutes a public event. Crowd behaviour, conspiracy theories, millennial pursuits, status consciousness: these, and their irrational features, claim increasing attention. Though their effect may be subtly denigratory they are here to stay. These are *group* phenomena, which identify common behaviour patterns. In biography there is perhaps a similar trend, Psychologically-minded historians are concerned to relate the individual to his time and place. Some neo-Freudians, of whom the most important is Erik Erikson, have correspondingly shifted the emphasis from the subject's first few years to the period of adolescence and early manhood, in which he seeks his identity within the given social context. Erikson's *Young Man Luther* suggests among other things the value of a renewed interest in the phenomenon of the Great Man—*i.e.*, the man who exercises a decisive influence upon his fellows. Earlier writers—Goethe, Carlyle, Emerson—discerned something of what was involved. Our authoritarian experiences supply fresh stimulus to investigation.

As historians turn to unfamiliar or half-forgotten questions, our demands upon source material alter and widen accordingly. This is one of the justifications for exemplary labours such as those of Arthur Link. Our notion of what may be relevant information enlarges enormously, as we begin to perceive unsuspected correspondences between public and private spheres. One example is the relation between physical types and personality. Another is family structure: not simply the relation between children and parents, but also between the children themselves. Are the firstborn apt to be unlike their younger siblings? Though the evidence assembled in a recent book, Irving Harris' *The Promised Seed* (1964), is too miscellaneous to be convincing, he is not talking nonsense. The novelist has already made rich use of the family as a theme. Historians, borrowing from psychology, may be able to reinforce understanding. The Adams family in the United States, with its marvellous hoard of diaries, is an outstanding instance. The youthful diary (Harvard U.P., 1964) of Charles Francis Adams, son of President John Quincy Adams and father of Henry Adams, is an extraordinary record of aspiration and frustration. The Beechers, another American 19th-century family, are hardly less intriguing.

A FINAL WORD on Woodrow Wilson. As with Luther, his private life is one of those that rightly excites curiosity, because his place in history is so prominent and because private compulsions impinged so markedly upon his public career. Everyone who has written about him with any intelligence confesses to a puzzle in the man.[5] Those who felt the force of his will, his lucidity, his charm and gaiety, or perhaps his guile (Theodore Roosevelt spoke of him as a "Byzantine logothete"), had to admit that even if Wilson were a bundle of tensions, the tensions were of an achieving order. He was remarkable. Yet on the whole his contemporaries did not find him odd. He was to them only a vigorous embodiment of American optimism and moralism.[6] There is no reason to suppose that some other American, occupying the presidency in the fatal years of 1914–19, would have acted very differently, or been able to secure a more just and lasting peace at Versailles. The puzzle in Wilson is why, in recurrent crises of which his 1919 battle with the Senate was the climax, he brought on defeat through obstinacy, when he could have got most of what he wanted. The reasons lie deep in his personality, and they are worth exploring.

The complaint against the Freud-Bullitt book is not that it criticises Wilson but that it caricatures him. He is not scrutinised but pilloried, which is as bad as sanctifying him. His importance is simultaneously denied and exaggerated. The limits of his public action are portrayed as private limitations. These limitations are then distorted and enlarged as in some cruel funfair mirror, so that little Tommy Wilson takes vengeance on his adored, intolerable father by wrecking Europe. There may have been something "demonic" in Wilson's make-up. Demonology is not the way to bring it out.

Marcus Cunliffe

[5] See, *e.g.*, George Sylvester Viereck, *The Strangest Friendship in History: Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House* (1932), p. 280: "Wilson's soul was a tetrarchy in which four dominant personalities strove for mastery. There was an intellectual self, an emotional self, a practical self and and a moral self, each dominating at times. The effort to maintain his psychic balance led to amazing inconsistencies of behaviour and judgment."

[6] Compare a comment in a letter from Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes to Felix Frankfurter in 1913, the year Wilson entered the presidency: "A man once wrote to me with some truth that the line of *most* resistance is the one to choose."

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

R. S. CRANE

The Idea of the Humanities and Other Essays, Critical and Historical

These two volumes bring together the best of Crane's published and unpublished writings. The first volume contains his reflections on the nature and history of the humanistic arts from the early Renaissance to the present day, the second is devoted to literary criticism and literary history.

712 pages, two volumes, 105s set

forthcoming August

The Knowledge Most Worth Having

edited by Wayne C. Booth

At a time when intelligent undergraduates everywhere are questioning the value of the knowledge offered to them, this stimulating book, the result of the Liberal Arts Conference on the College, Chicago, 1966, makes a strong case for liberal general education. Contributors include Sir John Cockcroft, John A. Simpson, Northrop Frye, Richard McKeon, F. Champion Ward and Edward H. Levi. Cloth 44s 6d, paper 14s net

forthcoming August

The Linguistic Turn

Recent Essays in Philosophical Method

edited by Richard M. Rorty

An anthology of important contributions to a major philosophical movement—the fifty essays include writings by Moore, Schlick, Black, Wisdom, Ryle, Russell, Carnap, Austin, Hampshire, Urmson, Quine, Strawson and others. 72s net

The University of Chicago Press
70 Great Russell Street, London WC1

Leading novels of the day

The Arrangement

ELIA KAZAN

'An unexpected and arresting tour de force' JAMES BALDWIN, N. Y. REVIEW
'Brilliantly written' TENNESSEE WILLIAMS
'A big book in many senses...in its humanity, its honesty, its stamina' NORMAN SHRAPNEL, GUARDIAN *30s*

JAMES JONES

GO TO THE WIDOW-MAKER

The tremendous new novel by the author of *From Here to Eternity* and *The Thin Red Line.* *30s*

MICHAEL FRAYN

TOWARDS THE END OF THE MORNING

'It is arguable that he is now our best-equipped younger prose-writer as well as being a very sane and very funny one' TIMES LIT. SUPP. *21s*

A Pursuit of Furies

JANICE WARNKE

'Rich, immensely stimulating . . . it abounds in flashes of insight and dramatic moments, and it is capable of exquisite tenderness' SYBILLE BEDFORD *25s*

Modern Australian Writing

A unique anthology edited by Geoffrey Dutton and including works by Patrick White, Hal Porter and A. D. Hope. *18s*

Also in Fontana Library *9s 6d*

COLLINS

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LETTERS

British Medicine

WITH MOST OF Professor Henry Miller's view of Medicine in Britain [ENCOUNTER, April] I find myself in agreement and sympathy. It was especially good to see at last a note on the harm that can be caused by our excessive reliance on "higher" degrees and diplomas rather than on what they are supposed (but so often fail) to measure, namely the intrinsic worth of the man and of the training he has undertaken. The sad business of tired, middle-aged doctors coming up time and again to take a "higher examination," regarding the exercise as part and parcel of the rat-race, but inwardly fuming at the humiliation of being put on the carpet by elders who are not by any means always their betters, certainly stands in need of change. I myself decided when a humble house-surgeon never to take part in "higher" pot-hunting or pot-awarding (except it be *honoris causa*). This was after a discussion with a very senior surgeon who had recently "won" the coveted M.D. (not to be confused, of course, with its American equivalent, which all doctors in that country possess). He reflected, amusingly, that he had once worked very hard for six years to qualify in Medicine and be called *doctor*; subsequently a course of book-learning had gained him a diploma in surgery and the privilege of being called *mister* again; "and now," said the new M.D., "am I supposed to start being *doctor* all over again?"

But Professor Miller is less than fair in his implied criticism of the older universities, whose students have three years' education in the basic medical sciences before what he slightingly calls their "overnight translation to a London Hospital." My own experience includes some twelve years at three provincial medical schools in this country, and also the recent benefit and privilege of teaching and researching in a great American medical school. Having now spent some twelve years too as a Cambridge don, may I say that Cambridge at its best, and for the majority (though not all) of its undergraduates, provides an intellectual training, and an education in both science and (for want of a better word) "humanity," which together represent the best preparation for hospital work that I have yet come across? The system is the envy of many, but prospective imitators should be warned that to be effective it demands from the staff a degree of commitment, and a capacity for hard work and hard thinking, that are not by any means always to be found amongst our medical educators.

BERNARD TOWERS

Jesus College,
Cambridge

Trial by Newspaper?

By Charles Fenby

THE MOST REMARKABLE feature of the controversy about "trial by newspaper" [ENCOUNTER, March-June] is the lack of evidence that any such thing exists.

In order to justify fresh restrictions on what the Press is allowed to report, it has to be proved—or there has to be strong suspicion—that juries are or have been prejudiced by what they read. But where is the evidence?

The Tucker Committee which was set up to decide whether such a suspicion was justified had to admit that the question was incapable of proof. Its recommendation that committal proceedings should not be reported—the recommendation accepted by Sir Frank Soskice when he was Home Secretary and now acted upon in the Criminal Justice Bill—was based on something called a "widespread belief" that prejudice was created. That this anonymous belief is thought an adequate reason for a vital change in the law must lead to nervous speculation as to what further changes could be effected by the same magic formula. Capital punishment? corporal punishment? severe censorship? The list seems endless.

The odd thing is that the anonymous holders of the "widespread belief" are thought more convincing than the experts who are supposed to have some professional knowledge of the matter. Thus the Lord Chief Justice:

> I strongly dislike the idea of judicial proceedings in private or in public with a muzzle on the Press. I do not think the case has been made out for preventing Press reports; neither has the case been made out that jurors are influenced by reading reports of committal proceedings. (14 February 1966.)

Others have suggested that if jurors are prejudiced either way it is in favour of a defendant not against him. Thus Lord Devlin: "There can be no doubt that if the prosecution had only to convince a judge or bench of judges there would be fewer acquittals" (Lecture at Bramshill College, 9 December 1965).

Finally, nothing would be simpler than to compile a list of cases in which juries have proved

CHARLES FENBY *is Editorial Director of the Westminster Press Provincial Newspapers and Chairman of the British Committee of the International Press Institute.*

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

themselves impervious to prejudicial matter. There is the well-remembered case of Dr. John Bodkin Adams (which led to the setting up of the Tucker Committee) who was acquitted in spite of the fact that charges against him which were never even proceeded with at the trial were made in the preliminary court and were freely reported. Perhaps even more striking are the cases in which men have been pronounced guilty of murder before being put on trial. Thus, in July 1963, a certain Ignacy Gerstel was indicted by a coroner's jury for the murder of a barmaid and was charged; yet three months later he appeared at Lincoln Assizes and was found not guilty.

It is odd that the Tucker Committee did not recognise such cases as proving that jurymen are not a lot of dunderheads who believe everything they read and that judges are perfectly competent to conduct a fair trial in the existing circumstances.

To say this is not to argue that what the newspapers publish is of no importance (they too often behave as if that were true) but simply that it is not a serious danger to the administration of justice. Why, then, is there this "widespread belief" that something is wrong somewhere?

There is a curious section in the Tucker Report which begins as follows: "It is relevant at this stage to mention the most important statutory restriction on the general right to publish proceedings which take place in open court"—this being the restriction on the publication of divorce proceedings. What was the relevance? Nobody has ever suggested that the ban on divorce court reporting was introduced in order to ensure a fair hearing. But of course there would be relevance if the Tucker Committee's recommendation to keep the Press out of preliminary courts is made for precisely the same reason as the restriction on divorce court reporting: public morals.

There certainly is a widespread belief that some newspapers have gone much too far in exploiting sensational court cases and that since they have failed to impose a voluntary restraint they ought to be restrained by law. But of course in these days, when the works of De Sade and Krafft-Ebing can be bought freely in paperbacks, and when any advocate of censorship or even restraint is thought a dangerous reactionary, if not a criminal lunatic, it would be a bold man who openly advocated censorship of the Press. The simple device of keeping the reporters out of preliminary hearings will, to some extent, have the same effect.

But if, in fact, the subject is not Jury Prejudice but Press Sensationalism it is not unreasonable to ask adherents of the "widespread belief" whether even trials before judges and jury ought to be reported. After all, reports of preliminary hearings often serve the valuable purpose of dispelling some of the rumours in a district where a crime has been committed. For example, the preliminary hearing in the Moors Case did something to take the heat out of a highly inflamed local situation and it took place no less than four months before the real trial. What precisely is the merit of reporting the real trial? The question has to be asked in order to point out just where we might be taken by the "widespread belief" school.

In other words: is the problem of sensationalism so grave that we are ready to put it down by instituting secret justice? It is surprising if there is not a consensus of opinion that the price is far too high—in fact ridiculous.

Why Nkrumah Failed

By C. L. R. James

The description of recent events in Ghana by one of the new military rulers has stimulated Miss Rita Hinden to write [Encounter, May]: "He is a Sandhurst product, a passionate devotee of British democratic institutions, staunchly loyal to the backbone to the Ghanaian army, an unflinching patriot of his own country."

Those phrases were probably used about Nkrumah when he came to power. The British Left, appalled at the results of African independence which it sponsored, scans Africa eagerly for a new messiah, trying to manufacture one even from Jomo Kenyatta. Now the military leadership in Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone is symbolised by Colonel Afrifa whom Miss Hinden quotes as considering Sandhurst "one of the greatest institutions in the world." Miss Hinden believes that "West Africa is now living through its Sandhurst era." It is for Sandhurst to disclaim any responsibility for cleansing independent Africa of the corruption, social disintegration, political disorder and brutality which it presents to the world today.

Miss Hinden has joined the denigration of Nkrumah and all his works which, inevitably, has been set in motion by those who overthrew him. The revolution which created independent Ghana was not, as Miss Hinden believes, due to Nkrumah's "dynamic personality"; nor to his "capturing the leadership for himself"; nor to a "rush of feeling [which] eventually secured independence." Nkrumah campaigned tirelessly, mobilising not only workers but remote African peasants for the ceaseless battle against Whitehall and its local representatives who sought to destroy his movement. His imprisonment ended in his being released to become head of government; like many other imprisoned African leaders, he alone could exercise governmental authority over the aroused population.

According to Miss Hinden, the British left behind a democratic constitution which Nkrumah sub-

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

verted. The British also left behind a people bearing the wounds and scars of three centuries of the slave-trade and a century of colonialism. Real subversion came from an unprincipled alliance of intellectuals like Danquah and Busia with tribal chiefs encouraged by the British Government in its efforts to destroy the independence movement. Of the period 1951–57 Nkrumah, in the presence of the Governor-General, could say: "Perhaps I will one day write my memoirs of that period, if I am lucky enough to find a publisher courageous enough to publish them."

Nkrumah began heavily burdened. He inherited a government in no way African, a language unfamiliar to the vast majority of an illiterate population. To the misunderstanding of Marxism prevalent among European intellectuals of his time, he added an equal misunderstanding of parliamentary democracy. He sincerely believed that a parliamentary opposition was a matter between himself, Dr. Danquah, Dr. Busia and other parliamentary leaders, who had consistently opposed the aims of his party. This experience fortified his conviction that a parliamentary opposition was a luxury which Ghana could not afford. He believed that for an underdeveloped country the effective form of government was a party on the Stalinist model. For ten years he sought to combine this party with a parade of constitutional government. The backwardness of the population and the range of powers which are a necessity for the governments of new countries precluded the success of this manoeuvre. The party became the irresistible centre of attraction for party stalwarts, many of whom became no more than political gangsters; businessmen prepared to barter political support for economic expediency; government officials who were prepared to do anything for promotion or merely to keep their jobs. The Nkrumahist party destroyed constitutionalism. When Nkrumah tried to legitimise the one party by the one-party state, it was too late.

He had a similar failure in his attempt to manoeuvre between East and West to gain economic aid from both. Thus, to use one-half of Stalin's famous phrase, he tried to "catch up with" if not to surpass the advanced countries. His failure can point a moral and adorn a tale, but not a tale, according to Miss Hinden, merely of "terrible corruption, profligacy, personal cruelty and mumbo-jumbo. . . ."

There was much more to Nkrumah.

In April 1958, he initiated the first conference of independent African states. His declaration—"To me the liberation of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up with the liberation of all Africa"—became a banner among Africans and people of African descent everywhere. As with his economic plans, he had nursed these ideas for many years. Yet here too, because of divisions in Africa and his political intemperance and ineptitude, he failed.

Under the stress of such defects, not only social but personal deterioration is inevitable and there is no doubt that well before the end Nkrumah was no longer the man who had led the revolution: history is full of examples (modern history of little else). But to understand the depths to which Nkrumah sank one must know the heights from which he fell. Miss Hinden is aware of neither. After his dismissal of the Chief Justice for a decision given from the bench, I broke publicly with him, ending an association of over twenty years. While, therefore, I could not have found myself on any platform, public or private, with those advocating his return to power, it is understandable that Fenner Brockway and David Pitt associated themselves with those seeking his restoration.

It is not the personality of Nkrumah or Sandhurst training for democracy which are here at issue. It is the whole of formerly colonial Africa and with it the mass of the population of India, China and South-east Asia. The decline and fall of Nkrumah is another glaring example of the illusion that a personal power can turn back the tide now overwhelming the majority of the world's population.

(*1*) The régimes at present in Asia and Africa, with their present resources, have no possibility whatever of overcoming constant economic crises and political and social decay, both the cause and effect of a situation at present without prospect of relief.

(*2*) Nothing at present in sight can set them on a viable road except the regenerative assistance of the accumulated wealth and technical knowledge of the advanced countries. Under no circumstances is this to be considered under the rubric of "aid" or "raising the prices of export crops," etc., etc.

(*3*) This is a political before it is an economic question. These states must make clear to the world that they have embarked on the task of setting their houses in order and establish social régimes which involve not only the support but the mass participation of their populations. Only upon this basis can they demand integration into the world economy. Only upon this basis can they use it. Only upon this basis can they unloose the political currents in the advanced countries which can undertake so vast a reorganisation of economics and politics.

This may sound utopian. So did the programmes and policies of less than a dozen people, including Nkrumah, who over twenty years ago, in the face of universal scepticism, worked for the independence of colonial Africa. Today leaders in Africa (and elsewhere) need to absorb not Sandhurst democracy but the new anthropology. For the first time in many centuries this today makes clear the harmony in thought and in aim of all minds, not merely those of advanced and underdeveloped countries but including even those whom M. Lévi-Strauss calls primitives of *The Savage Mind*.

C. L. R. James, *who was once a close associate of Nkrumah (and his one-time adviser, the late George Padmore), is the author of* The Black Jacobins *(new edition 1963, Vintage Press), a history of the Communist International, and a remarkable book on cricket,* Beyond A Boundary *(Hutchinson, 1963).*

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

London

AND SPEAKING *of surrealism [writes Stanley Reynolds, U.S. television critic], my own accent and the late hour of telephoning resulted in "serialism" in yesterday's notice for what should, of course, have been surrealism all through my review of Alan Owen's play* The Loser. *My apologies for any consequent ambiguities.*

THE GUARDIAN

London

ACCORDING *to an article in the Oxford magazine* Cherwell, *Tariq Ali, ex-President of the Union, who has just visited North Viet Nam, wears revolutionary badges and on his fingers rings made out of the metal from shot-down American planes.*

He is certainly a remarkable man in many ways. "In South Viet Nam," he is reported as saying in the same article, "there is no personality cult, whereas in Hanoi and Haiphong there are busts and posters of Dien Bien Phu everywhere, and streets named after him."

There his observation may be at fault. Some of these busts are surely those of that much-loved national heroine, homely, matronly Pearl Harbour. DAILY TELEGRAPH

Montreux

THIS YEAR *the* Hors Concours *submissions to the Montreux Festival of TV Light Entertainment have to be the submitting country's most popular shows [Peter Black writes].*

The BBC's Hors Concours *entry was the Boxing Day special edition of* Till Death Us Do Part. *I watched alongside the translator's booths. The German, a fat, humorous chap who likes to act out what he is translating, was having a fine time spluttering and heaving at Alf Garnett. The French woman admitted to me that the job had taxed her powers almost to bursting point.*

"Silly moo" became "old female goat." "You traitorous Scouse git" became "False coin! Thou art indeed from Liverpool!"—which sounded rather unfair to the place. "You great hairy nellie" became "old monkey." You can judge how flat it must have sounded when I tell you that "nit" was reduced to fou (*mad*), *and "coons" became* Nègres (*Negroes*). DAILY MAIL

New York

THE VIET NAM WAR *is no more popular with comic-book buying youngsters than with their taxpaying elders.*

National Periodical Publications Inc., which puts out 48 comic book titles, including "Superman", "Batman", and four war series, has dropped Viet Nam comics because of poor sales. "This is not a popular war in the sense that it doesn't have 100 per cent public backing," explained Irwin Donenfeld, executive vice-president, defending the company from a stockholder's charge that its war comics "glorify killing."

"In no instance have we shown our heroes in situations in which they enjoy being at war." National Periodical publishes "Our Fighting Forces," "GI Combat" and "Star Spangled War Stories" all bimonthlies. All four deal exclusively with the two world wars and the Korean conflict. "We attempted to update by bringing in Viet Nam and the Green Berets, but they weren't as saleable and we dropped them."

WALL STREET JOURNAL

Peking

A CONGOLESE *football team beat a Shanghai team 3–1 last night before 30,000 spectators, most of whom brought their copies of "Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung," Peking Radio said.*

The radio softened the blow to Shanghai's pride by disclosing that both teams had read Mao's book before the match. THE GUARDIAN

Washington

A YALE UNIVERSITY PSYCHOLOGIST *is developing a computer dictionary that might be able to translate what people say into what they are actually thinking about. Underlying the vast number of words in the language, according to Julius Laffal, is a limited number of concepts. These, he said, are closer than words to fundamental human experience, and may be the basic categories in which we organise our experience. "Translating words into concepts may be a way of getting at the hidden meanings."*

So far, he has developed a dictionary which employs the speed and memory of an electronic computer to recall at demand some 20,000 words. The machine can group words according to the concepts they represent.

As an example, he noted that words such as up, top, high, roof, fly and many others would all be grouped as referring to one area of meaning—"up." N.Y. HERALD-TRIBUNE

Saigon

BRITISH *Consular officials in Viet Nam were justly offended when the* Saigon Daily Post, *in reporting a lecture on the philosopher Hobbes given in Saigon by a visiting professor, referred to "the life of man" in Hobbes' words as being "solitary, poor, nasty, british and short."*

PRIVATE EYE

London

OH MY PROPHETIC SOUL. *Roll over Dover Wilson; Penguin Books have oddly decided to bring out "The Marowitz Hamlet" this spring, the version Charles Marowitz staged in London a year ago. "All the words are Shakespeare's," he said yesterday. "I've merely cut some lines and blended certain characters." Marowitz and Allen Lane instead of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?*

THE GUARDIAN

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sinyavsky's "Evtushenko"

FROM this month's *Authors* column [April] it would appear that Peter Levi and I did not translate Evtushenko's long poem-cycle *Bratskaya GES* (the subject of Andrei Sinyavsky's review) in our recent volume because it was not available to us. This is not the case—we in fact chose not to translate it because it is not good enough. As Sinyavsky indicates, it is a curate's egg; the good bits cannot make up for the poor overall effect. However, it is worth protesting mildly at the slighting generalised remarks that Professor Gifford makes about Evtushenko, his generation and the so-called "poetry of compromise"—they do not seem to me to follow from Sinyavsky's critical but fair review.

ROBIN MILNER-GULLAND

School of European Studies,
The University of Sussex

STATEMENT

By the Trustees of ENCOUNTER

THE TRUSTEES of ENCOUNTER deeply regret the serious differences of viewpoint that have caused two of the Editors, Mr. Stephen Spender and Professor Frank Kermode, who have rendered services of the highest value to the magazine, to resign. The views and opinions of all concerned have been amply ventilated in the public press, and the Trustees' present purpose is simply to announce that in order to ensure continuity Mr. Melvin J. Lasky, who has made over the past nine years a notable contribution to the success of ENCOUNTER, has agreed to remain as co-Editor. Mr. Nigel Dennis has been appointed as the other co-Editor.

The Trustees intend in the near future to survey the whole question of the editorial structure of ENCOUNTER, and to consider what long-term arrangements may be appropriate.

The main point is that ENCOUNTER has, since it was established in 1953, enjoyed complete independence in its editorial policy. The Editors alone have always been responsible for what they published. This was so both before 1964, when the magazine was financially supported by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and subsequently when the financial sponsorship has been provided—as it is at present—by the International Publishing Corporation (Chairman: Cecil H. King). The Trustees are confident that the same editorial independence will be maintained by ENCOUNTER in the future.

SIR WILLIAM HAYTER — EDWARD SHILS
ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR. — ANDREW SHONFIELD

AUTHORS

Maurice Cranston is Reader in Political Science at the London School of Economics. He is the author of a study of Sartre (1962, in the Oliver & Boyd "Writers and Critics" series) and a biography of John Locke (1957)....

Donald Thomas teaches at the Welsh College of Advanced Technology, Cardiff. His book of poems, *Points of Contact*, won the Eric Gregory Award in 1962 and his account of English literary censorship, *A Long Time Burning*, is to appear in 1968....

THE DIARY of **Count Harry Kessler** was translated by **Sarah Gainham** and is the first of three instalments which we will be publishing. *Ecce Homo* by George Grosz has just been re-published by Methuen, 84s....

THE works by **Flann O'Brien** discussed in **John Wain's** article are published by MacGibbon & Kee, London: *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1960); *The Hard Life* (1961), Four Square paperback (1964); *The Dalkey Archive* (1964)....

Raymond Aron's article in this number was translated by **Professor Douglas Johnson** (University of Birmingham), among whose recent books are studies of *Guizot* (1963), and *France and the Dreyfus Affair* (1966)....

Günter Grass' play, *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising*, which is discussed by *R* in "Column," is published by Secker & Warburg (25s.)....

QUOTATIONS from letters in **Richard Ellmann's** essay on Oscar Wilde are taken from *The Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (London and New York, 1962)....

Cover design by **Colin Banks & John Miles.**

ENCOUNTER Magazine is published in London by Encounter Ltd. (25 Haymarket S.W.1), in association with the International Publishing Corporation (33 Holborn, E.C.1).

ENCOUNTER BOOKS are published in association with Weidenfeld & Nicolson (5 Winsley Street, W.1).

MANUSCRIPTS for ENCOUNTER should be sent to 25 Haymarket, London, S.W.1, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope (English stamp) or international reply coupons, otherwise they cannot be returned. For subscription details see page 1.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED, LONDON AND BECCLES

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Grave, learned men of good report
Unravel, in this journal,
Issues of the deeper sort,
Not merely news diurnal.
Not even they can clarify
Earth's mess, the jig-saw global---
So let us all, before we try,
Sip something stout and noble.

Encounter BINDER

The ENCOUNTER Easibinder enables readers, for half the cost of full binding, to preserve their copies in an attractive and durable format. Each copy of the magazine, as received, can be quickly inserted in the case and secured there. Copies can just as easily be removed.

The binder holds six copies. It is strongly made with stiff covers, bound in maroon and grey cloth, with the title of the magazine blocked in gold on the spine. Full assembly instructions are included with each binder.

The ENCOUNTER Easibinder costs 13/- or $2.00, including the cost of packing and posting by surface mail to any address in the world. There is no trade discount.

ORDER BY COUPON OR SIMILAR LETTER

To **ENCOUNTER (Binder), 25 HAYMARKET, LONDON S.W.1.**

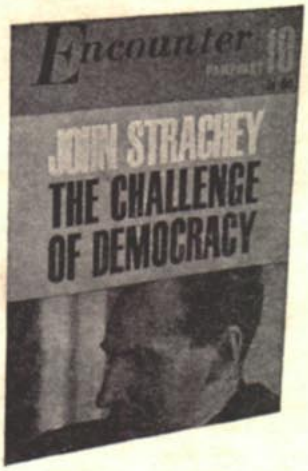
Please send.....ENCOUNTER Easibinder(s). I enclose cheque/P.O. for.....(13/- or $2.00 per binder).

NAME.....

ADDRESS .....

.....

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Encounter

PAMPHLET SERIES

1.	**Edward Shils (Ed.):** *Problems of Afro-Asian New States*	Out of Print
2.	**Richard Lowenthal:** *The Points of the Compass*	2s. 6d. (35 cents)
3.	**John Strachey:** *The Strangled Cry*	2s. 6d. (35 cents)
4.	**C. A. R. Crosland:** *The Future of the Left*	Out of Print
5.	**John Strachey:** *The Great Awakening*	3s. 6d. (50 cents)
6.	**Theodore Draper:** *Castro's Communism*	1s. 6d. (20 cents)
7.	**Marcus Cunliffe & Melvin J. Lasky:** *America and Europe: Transatlantic Images*	2s. 6d. (35 cents)
8.	**Rita Hinden:** *Africa and Democracy*	2s. (30 cents)
9.	**Khrushchev on Culture:** *The text of his speech on March 8th, 1963, with notes on Jazz, Cinema, etc.*	3s. 6d. (50 cents)
10.	**John Strachey:** *The Challenge of Democracy*	3s. 6d. (50 cents)
11.	**Raymond Aron:** *The Epoch of Universal Technology*	3s. 6d. (50 cents)
12.	**Sidney Hook:** *Marxism in the Western World*	3s. 6d. (50 cents)

Of the pamphlets listed above all are "originals" except Nos. 2, 4 and 7, which consist of material republished from ENCOUNTER

Add 5d. (6 cents) per copy for postage

ENCOUNTER . 25 HAYMARKET . LONDON S.W.1

PRODUCED 2003 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED